ESSAYS ON GOETHE.

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ESSAYS ON GOETHE.

BY

THOMAS CARLYLE.

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INTRODUCTION.

Thomas Carlyle, at the outset of his career as a writer, had a faith in Goethe which brought him into correspondence with that greatest of the German poets. While in doubt as to the shaping of his future career, he looked to Goethe for counsel with such trust as no other man inspired; and in his earlier writings in the *Edinburgh Review* he set forth to English readers the grounds of his admiration with an insight for which the poet himself was grateful. For, till Carlyle had taught them better, the English recognised in Goethe no more than a sentimental author of "The Sorrows of Werter," and the author of "Faust," which they understood no better than to see in it a Byronic Mephistopheles. The essays here reprinted as a distinct group, first taught readers in England to appreciate in some degree the breadth of Goethe's range of power, and to sound depths in him that were below the surface of their own imagining.

Goethe died, at an age that had passed fourscore, in the year before Carlyle's "Sartor Resartus" began to appear in *Fraser's Magazine;* and the last piece in this volume, written in 1832, upon the death of Goethe, was sent to Jeffrey from Craigenputtock, two years before Carlyle and his wife settled in London for the rest of their lives at No. 5, Cheyne Row.

Thomas Carlyle was born on the 4th of December, 1795, at Ecclefechan, in Dumfriesshire. His father was a stonemason, and his mother had been a maid-servant. At ten years old Carlyle was placed under Adam Hope, at Annan School, the "Hinterschlag Gymnasium" of "Sartor Resartus." At fourteen he was sent to the University of Edinburgh to be trained for the ministry. He took no degree there. At nineteen he obtained, by competition at Dumfries, the post of mathematical master in the Annan Academy, where he earned £60 or £70 a year, that enabled him to relieve his father of further payments for his training as a divinity student. Afterwards, when his friend Edward Irving was rebelled against, for his severity as a schoolmaster, by many of the parents of the children of Kirkcaldy, it was resolved to revive the Kirkcaldy parish school, and professors of the University of Edinburgh were asked to recommend a master for it. They recommended Carlyle, and the rival teachers were good friends together there until 1818, when Carlyle was twenty-three years old, and they both went back to Edinburgh. There Thomas Carlyle put away definitely all thought of entering the Scottish Church, and sought to earn by his pen, deriving part of his little income from the writing of articles for Brewster's *Edinburgh Encyclopædia*.

In 1823, at the age of twenty-eight, Carlyle was first introduced to Jane Welsh, his future wife, by Edward Irving, whose pupil she had been in her girlhood. Her father was dead, and she was living with her mother. A house and land at Craigenputtock formed part of their little property.

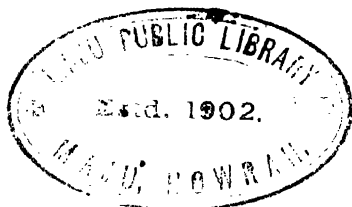
In 1822 Carlyle had contributed to a *New Edinburgh Review* a paper on Goethe's "Faust," Goethe thus being his first topic as a reviewer. While at Kirkcaldy he had translated Legendre's "Geometry," and the translation was published in 1824. He was earning then, for a short time, £200 a year at Edinburgh as tutor to young Charles Buller. In 1823 and 1824—from October, 1823—his "Life of Schiller" was appearing in the *London Magazine*, and in 1824 he published his translation of Goethe's "Wilhelm Meister," which was praised and abused, and so brought the translator into notice. The "Life of Schiller" was published as a volume in 1825. When it was afterwards translated into German, Goethe himself wrote a preface to it, and gave some account of the young English author who had done more than any man to make German literature truly understood in England.

In 1826 Carlyle married Jane Welsh, and about the same time an introduction from Bryan Waller Procter ("Barry Cornwall") obtained for him the friendship of Francis Jeffrey, editor of the *Edinburgh Review*. In 1827 Carlyle published "Specimens of German Romance." In 1828, when his age was thirty-three, Carlyle and his wife went to live on the wife's property at Craigenputtock, where his chief income as a writer was drawn from his contributions to the *Edinburgh Review*. Among the earliest essays are the two upon Goethe, which are here followed by the paper written when news came of Goethe's death.

This little book, then, represents Carlyle at the very outset of his career as a writer. He was strongly

influenced by his delight in German literature, which had then reached its time of greatest power. His style, which never lost the marks of German hands, was affected most, perhaps, by Jean Paul Friedrich Richter, upon whom, also in 1828, he wrote an essay containing some passages that might be applied now to Carlyle himself. But he had felt in its full force the strength of Goethe, to whom he was drawn more than to any other man at any other time. Carlyle was, in his correspondence with Goethe, sitting at the Master's feet, and confiding to him the doubts, struggles, and hopes in his own mind, that preceded his final resolve that he would earn his bread as a man of letters. The resolve was that, as a writer, he would labour only to assert the highest truth of which he was assured. So he began, as he said, to "prophesy"; wrote "Sartor Resartus" in the solitudes of Craigenputtock; and then pitched his tent in the great city, where he did not prophesy in vain, because the truth in him was recognised, and he, being dead, speaks yet and is gladly heard.

H. M.



GOETHE.

[1828.]

IT is not on this "Second Portion" of Goethe's Works, which at any rate contains nothing new to us, that we mean at present to dwell. In our last Number,* we engaged to make some survey of his writings and character in general; and must now endeavour, with such insight as we have, to fulfil that promise.

We have already said that we reckoned this no unimportant subject; and few of Goethe's readers can need to be reminded that it is no easy one. We hope also that our pretensions in regard to it are not exorbitant; the sum of our aims being nowise to solve so deep and pregnant an inquiry, but only to show that an inquiry of such a sort lies ready for solution; courts the attention of thinking men among us, nay, merits a thorough investigation, and must sooner or later obtain it. Goethe's literary history appears to us a matter, beyond most others, of rich, subtle, and manifold significance; which will require and reward the best study of the best heads, and to the right

* In the article on "Goethe's Helena."

exposition of which not one but many judgments will be necessary.

However, we need not linger, preluding on our own inability, and magnifying the difficulties we have so courageously volunteered to front. Considering the highly complex aspect which such a mind of itself presents to us; and, still more, taking into account the state of English opinion in respect of it, there certainly seem few literary questions of our time so perplexed, dubious, perhaps hazardous, as this of the character of Goethe; but few also on which a well-founded or even a sincere word would be more likely to profit. For our countrymen, at no time indisposed to foreign excellence, but at all times cautious of foreign singularity, have heard much of Goethe, but heard, for the most part, what excited and perplexed rather than instructed them. Vague rumours of the man have, for more than half a century, been humming through our ears: from time to time, we have even seen some distorted, mutilated transcript of his own thoughts, which, all obscure and hieroglyphical as it might often seem, failed not to emit here and there a ray of keenest and purest sense; travellers also are still running to and fro, importing the opinions or, at worst, the gossip of foreign countries: so that, by one means or another, many of us have come to understand that considerably the most distinguished poet and thinker of his age is called Goethe, and lives at Weimar, and

must, to all appearance, be an extremely surprising character: but here, unhappily, our knowledge almost terminates; and still must Curiosity, must ingenuous love of Information, and mere passive Wonder, alike inquire: What manner of man *is* this? How shall we interpret, how shall we even see him? What is his spiritual structure, what at least are the outward form and features of his mind? Has he any real poetic worth; how much to his own people, how much to us?"

Reviewers, of great and of small character, have manfully endeavoured to satisfy the British world on these points: but which of us could believe their report? Did it not rather become apparent, as we reflected on the matter, that this Goethe of theirs was not the real man, nay, could not be any real man whatever? For what, after all, were their portraits of him but copies, with some retouchings and ornamental appendages, of our grand English original Picture of the German generically?—in itself such a piece of art, as national portraits, under like circumstances, are wont to be; and resembling Goethe, as some unusually expressive Sign of the Saracen's Head may resemble the present Sultan of Constantinople!

Did we imagine that much information, or any very deep sagacity were required for avoiding such mistakes, it would ill become us to step forward on this

occasion. But surely it is given to every man, if he will but take heed, to know so much as whether or not he *knows*. And nothing can be plainer to us than that if, in the present business, we can report *aught* from our own personal vision and clear hearty belief, it will be a useful novelty in the discussion of it. Let the reader be patient with us, then; and according as he finds that we speak honestly and earnestly, or loosely and dishonestly, consider our statement, or dismiss it as unworthy of consideration.

Viewed in his merely external relations, Goethe exhibits an appearance such as seldom occurs in the history of letters, and indeed, from the nature of the case, can seldom occur. A man who, in early life, rising almost at a single bound into the highest reputation over all Europe; by gradual advances, fixing himself more and more firmly in the reverence of his countrymen, ascends silently through many vicissitudes to the supreme intellectual place among them; and now, after half a century, distinguished by convulsions, political, moral, and poetical, still reigns, full of years and honours, with a soft undisputed sway; still labouring in his vocation, still forwarding, as with kingly benignity, whatever can profit the culture of his nation: such a man might justly attract our notice, were it only by the singularity of his fortune. Supremacies of this sort are rare in modern times; so universal, and of such continuance, they are

almost unexampled. For the age of the Prophets and Theologic Doctors has long since passed away; and now it is by much slighter, by transient and mere earthly ties, that bodies of men connect themselves with a man. The wisest, most melodious voice cannot in these days pass for a divine one; the word Inspiration still lingers, but only in the shape of a poetic figure, from which the once earnest, awful, and soul-subduing sense has vanished without return. The polity of Literature is called a Republic; oftener it is an Anarchy, where, by strength or fortune, favourite after favourite rises into splendour and authority, but, like Masaniello, while judging the people is on the third day deposed and shot. Nay, few such adventurers can attain even this painful pre-eminence; for at most, it is clear, any given age can have but one first man; many ages have only a crowd of secondary men, each of whom is first in his own eyes: and seldom, at best, can the "Single Person" long keep his station at the head of this wild commonwealth; most sovereigns are never universally acknowledged, least of all in their lifetime; few of the acknowledged can reign peaceably to the end.

Of such a perpetual dictatorship Voltaire among the French gives the last European instance; but even with him it was perhaps a much less striking affair. Voltaire reigned over a sect, less as their lawgiver than as their general; for he was at bitter enmity with the

'great numerical majority of his nation, by whom his services, far from being acknowledged as benefits, were execrated as abominations. But Goethe's object has, at all times, been rather to unite than to divide; and though he has not scrupled, as occasion served, to speak forth his convictions distinctly enough on many delicate topics, and seems, in general, to have paid little court to the prejudices or private feelings of any man, or body of men, we see not at present that his merits are anywhere disputed, his intellectual endeavours controverted, or his person regarded otherwise than with affection and respect. In later years, too, the advanced age of the poet has invested him with another sort of dignity; and the admiration to which his great qualities give him claim is tempered into a milder, grateful feeling, almost as of sons and grandsons to their common father. Dissentients, no doubt, there are and must be; but, apparently, their cause is not pleaded in words: no man of the smallest note speaks on that side; or at most, such men may question, not the worth of Goethe, but the cant and idle affectation with which, in many quarters, this must be promulgated and bepraised. Certainly there is not, probably there never was, in any European country, a writer who, with so cunning a style, and so deep, so abstruse a sense, ever found so many readers. For, from the peasant to the king, from the callow dilettante and innamorato, to the grave transcendental

philosopher, men of all degrees and dispositions are familiar with the writings of Goethe: each studies them with affection, with a faith which, "where it cannot unriddle, learns to trust;" each takes with him what he is adequate to carry, and departs thankful for his own allotment. Two of Goethe's intensest admirers are Schelling of Munich, and a worthy friend of ours in Berlin; one of these among the deepest men in Europe, the other among the shallowest.

All this is, no doubt, singular enough; and a proper understanding of it would throw light on many things. Whatever we may think of Goethe's ascendency, the existence of it remains a highly curious fact; and to trace its history, to discover by what steps such influence has been attained, and how so long preserved, were no trivial or unprofitable inquiry. It would be worth while to see so strange a man for his own sake; and here we should see, not only the man himself, and his own progress and spiritual development, but the progress also of his nation: and this at no sluggish or even quiet era, but in times marked by strange revolutions of opinions, by angry controversies, high enthusiasm, novelty of enterprise, and doubtless, in many respects, by rapid advancement; for that the Germans have been, and still are, restlessly struggling forward, with honest unwearied effort, sometimes with enviable success, no one who knows them will deny; and as little, that in every province of Literature, of Art and

humane accomplishment, the influence, often the direct guidance of Goethe may be recognised. The history of his mind is, in fact, at the same time, the history of German culture in his day: for whatever excellence this individual might realise has sooner or later been acknowledged and appropriated by his country; and the title of *Musagetes*, which his admirers give him, is perhaps, in sober strictness, not unmerited. Be it for good or for evil, there is certainly no German, since the days of Luther, whose life can occupy so large a space in the intellectual history of that people.

In this point of view, were it in no other, Goethe's *Dichtung und Wahrheit*, so soon as it is completed, may deserve to be reckoned one of his most interesting works. We speak not of its literary merits, though in that respect, too, we must say that few Autobiographies have come in our way, where so difficult a matter was so successfully handled; where perfect knowledge could be found united so kindly with perfect tolerance; and a personal narrative, moving along in soft clearness, showed us a man, and the objects that environed him, under an aspect so verisimilar, yet so lovely, with an air dignified and earnest, yet graceful, cheerful, even gay: a story as of a Patriarch to his children; such, indeed, as few men can be called upon to relate, and few, if called upon, could relate so well. What would we give for such an Autobiography of Shakspeare, of Milton, even of Pope or Swift!

The *Dichtung und Wahrheit* has been censured considerably in England; but not, we are inclined to believe, with any insight into its proper meaning. The misfortune of the work among us was, that we did not know the narrator *before* his narrative; and could not judge what sort of narrative he was bound to give, in these circumstances, or whether he was bound to give any at all. We saw nothing of his situation; heard only the sound of his voice; and hearing it, never doubted but he must be perorating in official garments from the rostrum, instead of speaking trustfully by the fireside. For the chief ground of offence seemed to be, that the story was not noble enough; that it entered on details of too poor and private a nature; verged here and there towards garrulity; was not, in one word, written in the style of what we call a *gentleman*. Whether it might be written in the style of a *man*, and how far these two styles might be compatible, and what might be their relative worth and preferableness, was a deeper question, to which apparently no heed had been given. Yet herein lay the very cream of the matter; for Goethe was not writing to "persons of quality" in England, but to persons of heart and head in Europe: a somewhat different problem perhaps, and requiring a somewhat different solution. As to this ignobleness and freedom of detail, especially, we may say, that, to a German, few accusations could appear more surprising than this, which, with us, constitutes the head and

front of his offending. Goethe, in his own country, far from being accused of undue familiarity towards his readers, had, up to that date, been labouring under precisely the opposite charge. It was his stateliness, his reserve, his indifference, his contempt for the public, that were censured. Strange, almost inexplicable, as many of his works might appear; loud, sorrowful, and altogether stolid as might be the criticisms they underwent, no word of explanation could be wrung from him; he had never even deigned to write a preface. And in later and juster days, when the study of Poetry came to be prosecuted in another spirit, and it was found that Goethe was standing, not like a culprit to plead for himself before the literary *plebeians*, but like a high teacher and preacher, speaking for truth, to whom both *plebeians* and *patricians* were bound to give all ear, the outward difficulty of interpreting his works began indeed to vanish; but enough still remained, nay, increased curiosity had given rise to new difficulties and deeper inquiries. Not only *what* were these works, but *how* did they originate, became questions for the critic. Yet several of Goethe's chief productions, and of his smaller poems nearly the whole, seemed so intimately interwoven with his private history, that, without some knowledge of this, no answer to such questions could be given. Nay, commentaries have been written on single pieces of his, endeavouring, by way of guess, to supply this deficiency. We can thus judge whether, to the

Germans, such minuteness of exposition in this *Dichtung und Wahrheit* may have seemed a sin. Few readers of Goethe, we believe, but would wish rather to see it extended than curtailed.

It is our duty also to remark, if any one be still unaware of it, that the *Memoirs of Goethe*, published some years ago in London, can have no real concern with this Autobiography. The rage of hunger is an excuse for much; otherwise that German translator, whom indignant Reviewers have proved to know *no* German, were a highly reprehensible man. His work, it appears, is done from the French, and shows subtractions, and what is worse, additions. But the unhappy Dragoman has already been chastised, perhaps too sharply. If, warring with the reefs and breakers and cross eddies of Life, he still hover on this side the shadow of Night, and any word of ours might reach him, we would rather say: Courage, Brother! grow honest, and times will mend!

It would appear, then, that for inquirers into Foreign Literature, for all men anxious to see and understand the European world as it lies around them, a great problem is presented in this Goethe; a singular highly significant phenomenon, and now also means more or less complete for ascertaining its significance. A man of wonderful, nay unexampled reputation and intellectual influence among forty millions of reflective serious and cultivated men, invites us to study him;

and to determine for ourselves, whether and how far such influence has been salutary, such reputation merited. That this call will one day be answered, that Goethe will be seen and judged of in his real character among us, appears certain enough. His name, long familiar everywhere, has now awakened the attention of critics in all European countries to his works: he is studied wherever true study exists: eagerly studied even in France; nay, some considerable knowledge of his nature and spiritual importance seems already to prevail there.

For ourselves, meanwhile, in giving all due weight to so curious an exhibition of opinion, it is doubtless our part, at the same time, to beware that we do not give it too much. This universal sentiment of admiration is wonderful, is interesting enough; but it must not lead us astray. We English stand as yet without the sphere of it; neither will we plunge blindly in, but enter considerately, or, if we see good, keep aloof from it altogether. Fame, we may understand, is no sure test of merit, but only a probability of such: it is an accident, not a property of a man; like light, it can give little or nothing, but at most may show what is given; often it is but a false glare, dazzling the eyes of the vulgar, lending by casual extrinsic splendour the brightness and manifold glance of the diamond to pebbles of no value. A man is in all cases simply *the* man of the same intrinsic worth and weakness, whether

his worth and weakness lie hidden in the depths of his own consciousness, or be betrumpeted and beshouted from end to end of the habitable globe. These are plain truths, which no one should lose sight of; though, whether in love or in anger, for praise or for condemnation, most of us are too apt to forget them. But least of all can it become the critic to "follow a multitude to do evil," even when that evil is excess of admiration: on the contrary, it will behove him to lift up his voice, how feeble soever, how unheeded soever, against the common delusion; from which, if he can save, or help to save, any mortal, his endeavours will have been repaid.

With these things in some measure before us, we must remind our readers of another influence at work in this affair, and one acting, as we think, in the contrary direction. That pitiful enough desire for "originality," which lurks and acts in all minds, will rather, we imagine, lead the critic of Foreign Literature to adopt the negative than the affirmative with regard to Goethe. If a writer indeed feel that he is writing for England alone, invisibly and inaudibly to the rest of the Earth, the temptations may be pretty equally balanced; if he write for some small conclave, which he mistakenly thinks the representative of England, they may sway this way or that, as it chances. But writing in such isolated spirit is no longer possible. Traffic, with its swift ships, is uniting all nations into

one; Europe at large is becoming more and more one public; and in this public, the voices for Goethe, compared with those against him, are in the proportion, as we reckon them, both as to the number and value, of perhaps a hundred to one. We take in, not Germany alone, but France and Italy; not the Schlegels and Schellings, but the Manzonis and De Staëls. The bias of originality, therefore, may lie to the side of censure; and whoever among us shall step forward, with such knowledge as our common critics have of Goethe, to enlighten the European public, by contradiction in this matter, displays a heroism, which, in estimating his other merits, ought nowise to be forgotten.

Our own view of the case coincides, we confess, in some degree with that of the majority. We reckon that Goethe's fame has, to a considerable extent, been deserved; that his influence has been of high benefit to his own country; nay, more, that it promises to be of benefit to us, and to all other nations. The essential grounds of this opinion, which to explain minutely were a long, indeed boundless task, we may state without many words. We find then in Goethe, an Artist, in the high and ancient meaning of that term; in the meaning which it may have borne long ago among the masters of Italian painting, and the fathers of Poetry in England; we say that we trace in the creations of this man, belonging in every sense to our own time,

some touches of that old, divine spirit, which had long passed away from among us, nay, which, as has often been laboriously demonstrated, was not to return to this world any more.

Or perhaps we come nearer our meaning, if we say that in Goethe we discover by far the most striking instance, in our time, of a writer who is, in strict speech, what Philosophy can call a Man. He is neither noble nor plebeian, neither liberal nor servile, nor infidel nor devotee; but the best excellence of *all* these, joined in pure union; "a clear and universal *Man*." Goethe's poetry is no separate faculty, no mental handicraft; but the voice of the whole harmonious manhood: nay, it is the very harmony, the living and life-giving harmony of that rich manhood which forms his poetry. All good men may be called poets in act, or in word; all good poets are so in both. But Goethe besides appears to us as a person of that deep endowment, and gifted vision, of that experience also and sympathy in the ways of all men, which qualify him to stand forth, not only as the literary ornament, but in many respects too as the Teacher and exemplar of his age. For, to say nothing of his natural gifts, he has cultivated himself and his art, he has studied how to live and to write, with a fidelity, an unwearied earnestness, of which there is no other living instance; of which, among British poets especially, Wordsworth alone offers any resemblance. And this in our view is

the result: to our minds, in these soft, melodious imaginations of his, there is embodied the Wisdom which is proper to this time; the beautiful, the religious Wisdom, which may still, with something of its old impressiveness, speak to the whole soul; still, in these hard, unbelieving, utilitarian days, reveal to us glimpses of the unseen but not Unreal World, that so the Actual and the Ideal may again meet together, and clear Knowledge be again wedded to Religion, in the life and business of men.

Such is our conviction or persuasion with regard to the poetry of Goethe. Could we demonstrate this opinion to be true, could we even exhibit it with that degree of clearness and consistency which it has attained in our own thoughts, Goethe were, on our part, sufficiently recommended to the best attention of all thinking men. But, unhappily, it is not a subject susceptible of demonstration: the merits and characteristics of a Poet are not to be set forth by logic; but to be gathered by personal, and as in this case it must be, by deep and careful inspection of his works. Nay, Goethe's world is every way so different from ours; it costs us such effort, we have so much to remember, and so much to forget, before we can transfer ourselves in any measure into his peculiar point of vision, that a right study of him, for an Englishman, even of ingenuous, open, inquisitive mind, becomes unusually difficult; for a fixed, decided, contemptuous Englishman,

next to impossible. To a reader of the first class, helps may be given, explanations will remove many a difficulty; beauties that lay hidden may be made apparent; and directions, adapted to his actual position, will at length guide him into the proper track for such an inquiry. All this, however, must be a work of progression and detail. To do our part in it, from time to time, must rank among the best duties of an English Foreign Review. Meanwhile, our present endeavour limits itself within far narrower bounds. We cannot aim to make Goethe known, but only to prove that he is worthy of being known; at most, to point out, as it were afar off, the path by which some knowledge of him may be obtained. A slight glance at his general literary character and procedure, and one or two of his chief productions which throw light on these, must for the present suffice.

A French diplomatic personage, contemplating Goethe's physiognomy, is said to have observed: *Voilà un homme qui a eu beaucoup de chagrins.* A truer version of the matter, Goethe himself seems to think, would have been: Here is a man who has struggled toughly; who has *es sich recht sauer werden lassen.* Goethe's life, whether as a writer and thinker, or as a living active man, has indeed been a life of effort, of earnest toilsome endeavour after all excellence. Accordingly, his intellectual progress, his spiritual and moral history, as it may be gathered from his successive Works,

furnishes, with us, no small portion of the pleasure and profit we derive from perusing them. Participating deeply in all the influences of his age, he has from the first, at every new epoch, stood forth to elucidate the new circumstances of the time; to offer the instruction, the solace, which that time required. His literary life divides itself into two portions widely different in character: the products of the first, once so new and original, have long, either directly or through the thousand thousand imitations of them, been familiar to us; with the products of the second, equally original, and in our day far more precious, we are yet little acquainted. These two classes of works stand curiously related with each other; at first view, in strong contradiction, yet, in truth, connected together by the strictest sequence. For Goethe has not only suffered and mourned in bitter agony under the spiritual perplexities of his time; but he has also mastered these, he is above them, and has shown others how to rise above them. At one time, we found him in darkness, and now he is in light; he was once an Unbeliever, and now he is a Believer; and he Believes, moreover, not by denying his unbelief, but by following it out; not by stopping short, still less turning back, in his inquiries, but by resolutely prosecuting them. This, it appears to us, is a case of singular interest, and rarely exemplified, if at all, elsewhere, in these our days. How has this man, to whom the world once

offered nothing but blackness, denial, and despair, attained to that better vision which now shows it to him not tolerable only, but full of solemnity and loveliness? How has the belief of a Saint been united in this high and true mind with the clearness of a Sceptic; the devout spirit of a Fénelon made to blend in soft harmony with the gaiety, the sarcasm, the shrewdness of a Voltaire?

Goethe's two earliest works are *Götz von Berlichingen* and the *Sorrows of Werter*. The boundless influence and popularity they gained, both at home and abroad, is well known. It was they that established almost at once his literary fame in his own country; and even determined his subsequent private history, for they brought him into contact with the Duke of Weimar; in connection with whom, the Poet, engaged in manifold duties, political as well as literary, has lived for fifty-four years, and still, in honourable retirement, continues to live. Their effects over Europe at large were not less striking than in Germany.

"It would be difficult," observes a writer on this subject, "to name two books which have exercised a deeper influence on the subsequent literature of Europe, than these two performances of a young author; his first-fruits, the produce of his twenty-fourth year. *Werter* appeared to seize the hearts of men in all quarters of the world, and to utter for them the word which they had long been waiting to hear. As usually happens, too, this

same word, once uttered, was soon abundantly repeated; spoken in all dialects, and chanted through all notes of the gamut, till the sound of it had grown a weariness rather than a pleasure. Sceptical sentimentality, view-hunting, love, friendship, suicide, and desperation, became the staple of literary ware; and though the epidemic, after a long course of years, subsided in Germany, it re-appeared with various modifications in other countries, and everywhere abundant traces of its good and bad effects are still to be discerned. The fortune of *Berlichingen with the Iron Hand*, though less sudden, was by no means less exalted. In his own country, *Götz*, though he now stands solitary and childless, became the parent of an innumerable progeny of chivalry plays, feudal delineations, and poetico-antiquarian performances; which, though long ago deceased, made noise enough in their day and generation: and with ourselves, his influence has been perhaps still more remarkable. Sir Walter Scott's first literary enterprise was a translation of *Götz von Berlichingen;* and, if genius could be communicated like instruction, we might call this work of Goethe's the prime cause of *Marmion* and the *Lady of the Lake*, with all that has followed from the same creative hand. Truly, a grain of seed that has lighted on the right soil! For if not firmer and fairer, it has grown to be taller and broader than any other tree; and all the nations of the earth are still yearly gathering of its fruit.

"But, overlooking these spiritual genealogies, which bring little certainty and little profit, it may be sufficient to observe of *Berlichingen* and *Werter*, that they stand prominent among the causes, or, at the very least, among the signals of a great change in modern

literature. The former directed men's attention with a new force to the picturesque effects of the past; and the latter, for the first time, attempted the more accurate delineation of a class of feelings deeply important to modern minds, but for which our elder poetry offered no exponent, and perhaps could offer none, because they are feelings that arise from Passion incapable of being converted into Action, and belong chiefly to an age as indolent, cultivated, and unbelieving as our own. This, notwithstanding the dash of falsehood which may exist in *Werter* itself, and the boundless delirium of extravagance which it called forth in others, is a high praise which cannot justly be denied it. The English reader ought also to understand that our current version of *Werter* is mutilated and inaccurate: it comes to us through the all-subduing medium of the French, shorn of its caustic strength, with its melancholy rendered maudlin, its hero reduced from the stately gloom of a broken-hearted poet to the tearful wrangling of a dyspeptic tailor." *

To the same dark wayward mood which, in *Werter*, pours itself forth in bitter wailings over human life; and, in *Berlichingen*, appears as a fond and sad looking back into the Past, belong various other productions of Goethe's; for example, the *Mitschuldigen*, and the first idea of *Faust*, which, however, was not realised in actual composition till a calmer period of his history. Of this early harsh and crude yet fervid and genial period, *Werter* may stand here as the representative: and, viewed in its external and internal relation, will

* The translation given in this Library was another contemporary version, taken by two Germans from the German.

help to illustrate both the writer and the public he was writing for.

At the present day, it would be difficult for us, satisfied, nay, sated to nausea, as we have been with the doctrines of Sentimentality, to estimate the boundless interest which *Werter* must have excited when first given to the world. It was then new in all senses; it was wonderful, yet wished for, both in its own country and in every other. The Literature of Germany had as yet but partially awakened from its long torpor · deep learning, deep reflection, have at no time been wanting there; but the creative spirit had for above a century been almost extinct. Of late, however, the Ramlers, Rabeners, Gellerts, had attained to no inconsiderable polish of style; Klopstock's *Messias* had called forth the admiration, and perhaps still more the pride, of the country, as a piece of art; a high enthusiasm was abroad; Lessing had roused the minds of men to a deeper and truer interest in Literature, had even decidedly begun to introduce a heartier, warmer, and more expressive style. The Germans were on the alert; in expectation, or at least in full readiness for some far bolder impulse; waiting for the Poet that might speak to them from the heart to the heart. It was in Goethe that such a Poet was to be given them.

Nay, the Literature of other countries, placid, self-satisfied as they might seem, was in an equally expectant condition. Everywhere, as in Germany, there

was polish and languor, external glitter and internal vacuity; it was not fire, but a picture of fire, at which no soul could be warmed. Literature had sunk from its former vocation: it no longer held the mirror up to Nature; no longer reflected, in many-coloured expressive symbols, the actual passions, the hopes, sorrows, joys of living men: but dwelt in a remote conventional world, in *Castles of Otranto*, in *Epigoniads* and *Leonidases*, among clear, metallic heroes, and white, high, stainless beauties, in whom the drapery and elocution were nowise the least important qualities. Men thought it right that the heart should swell into magnanimity with Caractacus and Cato, and melt into sorrow with many an Eliza and Adelaide; but the heart was in no haste either to swell or to melt. Some pulses of heroical sentiment, a few *un*-natural tears might, with conscientious readers, be actually squeezed forth on such occasions; but they came only from the surface of the mind; nay, had the conscientious man considered of the matter, he would have found that they ought not to have come at all. Our only English poet of the period was Goldsmith; a pure, clear, genuine spirit, had he been of depth or strength sufficient: his *Vicar of Wakefield* remains the best of all modern Idyls; but it is and was nothing more. And consider our leading writers; consider the poetry of Gray, and the prose of Johnson. The first a laborious mosaic, through the hard stiff lineaments of which little life or true grace

could be expected to look: real feeling, and all freedom of expressing it, are sacrificed to pomp, to cold splendour; for vigour we have a certain mouthing vehemence, too elegant indeed to be tumid, yet essentially foreign to the heart, and seen to extend no deeper than the mere voice and gestures. Were it not for his *Letters*, which are full of warm exuberant power, we might almost doubt whether Gray was a man of genius; nay, was a living man at all, and not rather some thousand-times more cunningly devised poetical turning-loom than that of Swift's Philosophers in Laputa. Johnson's prose is true, indeed, and sound, and full of practical sense: few men have seen more clearly into the motives, the interests, the whole walk and conversation of the living busy world as it lay before him; but farther than this busy, and, to most of us, rather prosaic world, he seldom looked: his instruction is for men of business, and in regard to matters of business alone. Prudence is the highest Virtue he can inculcate; and for that finer portion of our nature, that portion of it which belongs essentially to Literature strictly so called, where our highest feelings, our best joys and keenest sorrows, our Doubt, our Love, our Religion reside, he has no word to utter; no remedy, no counsel to give us in our straits; or at most, if, like poor Boswell, the patient is importunate, will answer: "My dear sir, endeavour to clear your mind of cant."

The turn which Philosophical speculation had taken

in the preceding age corresponded with this tendency, and enhanced its narcotic influences; or was, indeed, properly speaking, the root they had sprung from. Locke, himself a clear, humbleminded, patient, reverent, nay, religious man, had paved the way for banishing religion from the world. Mind, by being modelled in men's imaginations into a Shape, a Visibility; and reasoned of as if it had been some composite, divisible and reunitable substance—some finer chemical salt, or curious piece of logical joinery—began to lose its immaterial, mysterious, divine though invisible character; it was tacitly figured as something that might, were our organs fine enough, be *seen*. Yet who had ever seen it? Who could ever see it? Thus by degrees it passed into a Doubt, a Relation, some faint Possibility; and at last into a highly-probable Nonentity. Following Locke's footsteps, the French had discovered that "as the stomach secretes Chyle, so does the brain secrete Thought." And what then was Religion, what was Poetry, what was all high and heroic feeling? Chiefly a delusion; often a false and pernicious one. Poetry indeed was still to be preserved; because Poetry was a useful thing; men needed amusement, and loved to amuse themselves with Poetry: the playhouse was a pretty lounge of an evening; then there were so many precepts, satirical, didactic, so much more impressive for the rhyme; to say nothing of your occasional verses, birthday odes, epithalamiums, epicediums, by which the

dream of existence may be so highly sweetened and embellished." Nay, does not Poetry, acting on the imaginations of men, excite them to daring purposes; sometimes, as in the case of Tyrtæus, to fight better; in which wise may it not rank as a useful stimulant to man, along with Opium and Scotch Whisky, the manufacture of which is allowed by law? In Heaven's name, then, let Poetry be preserved.

With Religion, however, it fared somewhat worse. In the eyes of Voltaire and his disciples, Religion was a superfluity, indeed a nuisance. Here, it is true, his followers have since found that he went too far; that Religion, being a great sanction to civil morality, is of use for keeping society in order, at least the lower classes, who have not the feeling of Honour in due force; and therefore, as a considerable help to the Constable and Hangman, *ought* decidedly to be kept up. But such toleration is the fruit only of later days. In those times, there was no question but how to get rid of it, root and branch, the sooner the better. A gleam of zeal, nay, we will call it, however basely alloyed, a glow of real enthusiasm and love of truth, may have animated the minds of these men, as they looked abroad on the pestilent jungle of Superstition, and hoped to clear the earth of it for ever. This little glow, so alloyed, so contaminated with pride and other poor or bad admixtures, was the last which thinking men were to experience in Europe for a time. So is

it always in regard to Religious Belief, how degraded and defaced soever: the delight of the Destroyer and Denier is no pure delight, and must soon pass away. With bold, with skilful hand, Voltaire set his torch to the jungle: it blazed aloft to heaven; and the flame exhilarated and comforted the incendiaries; but, unhappily, such comfort could not continue. Ere long this flame, with its cheerful light and heat, was gone: the jungle, it is true, had been consumed; but with its entanglements, its shelter, and its spots of verdure also; and the black, chill, ashy swamp, left in its stead, seemed for a time a greater evil than the other.

In such a state of painful obstruction, extending itself everywhere over Europe, and already master of Germany, lay the general mind, when Goethe first appeared in Literature. Whatever belonged to the finer nature of man had withered under the Harmattan breath of Doubt, or passed away in the conflagration of open Infidelity; and now, where the Tree of Life once bloomed and brought fruit of goodliest savour, there was only barrenness and desolation. To such as could find sufficient interest in the day-labour and day-wages of earthly existence; in the resources of the five bodily Senses, and of Vanity, the only mental sense which yet flourished, which flourished indeed with gigantic vigour, matters were still not so bad. Such men helped themselves forward, as they will generally do; and found the world, if not an altogether proper

sphere (for every man, disguise it as he may, has a *soul* in him), at least a tolerable enough place; where, by one item and another, some comfort, or show of comfort, might from time to time be got up, and these few years, especially since they were so few, be spent without much murmuring. But to men afflicted with the "malady of Thought," some devoutness of temper was an inevitable heritage: to such the noisy forum of the world could appear but an empty, altogether insufficient concern; and the whole scene of life had become hopeless enough. Unhappily, such feelings are yet by no means so infrequent with ourselves, that we need stop here to depict them. That state of Unbelief from which the Germans do seem to be in some measure delivered, still presses with incubus force on the greater part of Europe; and nation after nation, each in its own way, feels that the first of all moral problems is how to cast it off, or how to rise above it. Governments naturally attempt the first expedient; Philosophers, in general, the second.

The poet, says Schiller, is a citizen not only of his country, but of his time. Whatever occupies and interests men in general, will interest him still more. That nameless Unrest, the blind struggle of a soul in bondage, that high, sad, longing Discontent, which was agitating every bosom, had driven Goethe almost to despair. All felt it: he alone could give it voice. And here lies the secret of his popularity; in his deep,

susceptive heart, he felt a thousand times more keenly what every one was feeling; with the creative gift which belonged to him as a poet, he bodied it forth into visible shape, gave it a local habitation and a name; and so made himself the spokesman of his generation. *Werter* is but the cry of that dim, rooted pain, under which all thoughtful men of a certain age were languishing: it paints the misery, it passionately utters the complaint; and heart and voice, all over Europe, loudly and at once respond to it. True, it prescribes no remedy; for that was a far different, far harder enterprise, to which other years and a higher culture were required; but even this utterance of the pain, even this little, for the present, is ardently grasped at, and with eager sympathy appropriated in every bosom. If Byron's life-weariness, his moody melancholy, and mad stormful indignation, borne on the tones of a wild and quite artless melody, could pierce so deep into many a British heart, now that the whole matter is no longer new—is indeed old and trite—we may judge with what vehement acceptance this *Werter* must have been welcomed, coming as it did like a voice from unknown regions: the first thrilling peal of that impassioned dirge, which, in country after country, men's ears have listened to, till they were deaf to all else. For *Werter*, infusing itself into the core and whole spirit of Literature, gave birth to a race of sentimentalists, who have raged and wailed in every part of the world, till

better light dawned on them, or at worst, exhausted Nature laid herself to sleep, and it was discovered that lamenting was an unproductive labour. These funereal choristers, in Germany a loud, haggard, tumultuous, as well as tearful class, were named the *Kraftmänner*, or Power-men; but have all long since, like sick children, cried themselves to rest.

Byron was our English Sentimentalist and Power-man; the strongest of his kind in Europe; the wildest, the gloomiest, and it may be hoped the last. For what good is it to "whine, put finger i' the eye, and sob," in such a case? Still more, to snarl and snap in malignant wise, "like dog distract, or monkey sick"? Why should we quarrel with our existence, here as it lies before us, our field and inheritance, to make or to mar, for better or for worse; in which, too, so many noblest men have ever from the beginning, warring with the very evils we war with, both made and been what will be venerated to all time?

> What shapest thou here at the World? 'Tis shapen
>   long ago;
> The Maker shaped it, *he* thought it best even *so*.
> Thy lot is appointed, go follow its hest;
> Thy journey's begun, thou must move and not rest;
> For sorrow and care cannot alter thy case,
> And running, not raging, will win thee the race.

Meanwhile, of the philosophy which reigns in *Werter*, and which it has been our lot to hear so often

repeated elsewhere, we may here produce a short specimen. The following passage will serve our turn; and be, if we mistake not, new to the mere English reader:—

"That the life of man is but a dream, has come into many a head; and with me, too, some feeling of that sort is ever at work. When I look upon the limits within which man's powers of action and inquiry are hemmed in; when I see how all effort issues simply in procuring supply for wants, which again have no object but continuing this poor existence of ours; and then, that all satisfaction on certain points of inquiry is but a dreaming resignation, while you paint, with many-coloured figures and gay prospects, the walls you sit imprisoned by,—all this, Wilhelm, makes me dumb. I return to my own heart, and find there such a world! Yet a world, too, more in forecast and dim desire than in vision and living power. And then all swims before my mind's eye; and so I smile, and again go dreaming on as others do.

"That children know not what they want, all conscientious tutors and education-philosophers have long been agreed: but that full-grown men, as well as children, stagger to and fro along this earth; like these, not knowing whence they come or whither they go; aiming just as little after true objects; governed just as well by biscuit, cakes, and birch-rods: this is what no one likes to believe; and yet, it seems to me, the fact is lying under our very nose.

"I will confess to thee, for I know what thou wouldst say to me on this point, that those are the happiest who, like children, live from one day to the other, carrying

their dolls about with them, to dress and undress; gliding also, with the highest respect, before the drawer where mamma has locked the gingerbread; and, when they do get the wished-for morsel, devouring it with puffed-out cheeks, and crying, More!—these are the fortunate of the earth. Well is it likewise with those who can label their rag-gathering employments, or perhaps their passions, with pompous titles, and represent them to mankind as gigantic undertakings for its welfare and salvation. Happy the man who can live in such wise! But he who, in his humility, observes where all this issues, who sees how featly any small thriving citizen can trim his patch of garden into a Paradise, and with what unbroken heart even the unhappy crawls along under his burden, and all are alike ardent to see the light of this sun but one minute longer;—yes, he is silent, and he, too, forms his world out of himself, and he, too, is happy because he is a man. And then, hemmed-in as he is, he ever keeps in his heart the sweet feeling of freedom, and that this dungeon—can be left when he likes."

What Goethe's own temper and habit of thought must have been, while the materials of such a work were forming themselves within his heart, might be in some degree conjectured, and he has himself informed us. We quote the following passage from his *Dichtung und Wahrheit*. The writing of *Werter*, it would seem, indicating so gloomy, almost desperate a state of mind in the author, was at the same time a symptom, indeed a cause, of his now having got

delivered from such melancholy. Far from recommending suicide to others, as *Werter* has often been accused of doing, it was the first proof that Goethe himself had abandoned these "hypochondriacal crotchets:" the imaginary "Sorrows" had helped to free him from many real ones.

"Such weariness of life," he says, "has its physical and its spiritual causes; those we shall leave to the Doctor, these to the Moralist, for investigation; and in this so trite matter, touch only on the main point, where that phenomenon expresses itself most distinctly. All pleasure in life is founded on the regular return of external things. The alternations of day and night, of the seasons, of the blossoms and fruits, and whatever else meets us from epoch to epoch with the offer and command of enjoyment,—these are the essential springs of earthly existence. The more open we are to such enjoyments, the happier we feel ourselves; but, should the vicissitude of these appearances come and go without our taking interest in it; should such benignant invitations address themselves to us in vain, then follows the greatest misery, the heaviest malady; one grows to view life as a sickening burden. We have heard of the Englishman who hanged himself, to be no more troubled with daily putting off and on his clothes. I knew an honest gardener, the overseer of some extensive pleasure-grounds, who once splenetically exclaimed: Shall I see these clouds for ever passing, then, from east to west? It is told of one of our most distinguished men that he viewed with dissatisfaction the spring again growing green, and wished that, by way of change, it would for

once be red. These are specially the symptoms of life-weariness, which not seldom issues in suicide, and, at this time, among men of meditative, secluded character, was more frequent than might be supposed.

"Nothing, however, will sooner induce this feeling of satiety than the return of love. The first love, it is said justly, is the only one; for in the second, and by the second, the highest significance of love is in fact lost. That idea of infinitude, of everlasting endurance, which supports and bears it aloft, is destroyed: it seems transient, like all that returns.

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"Farther, a young man soon comes to find, if not in himself, at least in others, that moral epochs have their course, as well as the seasons. The favour of the great, the protection of the powerful, the help of the active, the goodwill of the many, the love of the few, all fluctuates up and down; so that we cannot hold it fast, any more than we can hold sun, moon, and stars. And yet these things are not mere natural events: such blessings flee away from us, by our own blame or that of others, by accident or destiny; but they do flee away, they fluctuate, and we are never sure of them.

"But what most pains the young man of sensibility is, the incessant return of our faults: for how long is it before we learn that, in cultivating our virtues, we nourish our faults along with them! The former rest on the latter, as on their roots; and these ramify themselves in secret as strongly and as wide, as those others in the open light. Now, as we for most part practise our virtues with forethought and will, but by our faults are overtaken unexpectedly, the former seldom give us

much joy, the latter are continually giving us sorrow and distress. Indeed, here lies the subtlest difficulty in Self-knowledge, the difficulty which almost renders it impossible. But figure, in addition to all this, the heat of youthful blood, an imagination easily fascinated and paralysed by individual objects; farther, the wavering commotions of the day; and you will find that an impatient striving to free oneself from such a pressure was no unnatural state.

"However, these gloomy contemplations, which, if a man yield to them, will lead him to boundless lengths, could not have so decidedly developed themselves in our young German minds, had not some outward cause excited and forwarded us in this sorrowful employment. Such a cause existed for us in the Literature, especially the Poetical Literature, of England, the great qualities of which are accompanied by a certain earnest melancholy, which it imparts to every one that occupies himself with it.

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"In such an element, with such an environment of circumstances, with studies and tastes of this sort; harassed by unsatisfied desires, externally nowhere called forth to important action; with the sole prospect of dragging on a languid, spiritless, mere civic life,—we had recurred, in our disconsolate pride, to the thought that life, when it no longer suited one, might be cast aside at pleasure; and had helped ourselves hereby, stintedly enough, over the crosses and tediums of the time. These sentiments were so universal, that *Werter*, on this very account, could produce the greatest effect; striking in everywhere with the dominant humour, and representing

the interior of a sickly youthful heart, in a visible and palpable shape. How accurately the English have known this sorrow might be seen from these few significant lines, written before the appearance of *Werter:*

> To griefs congenial prone,
> More wounds than nature gave he knew,
> While misery's form his fancy drew
> In dark ideal hues, and horrors not its own.

"Self-murder is an occurrence in men's affairs which, how much soever it may have already been discussed and commented upon, excites an interest in every mortal, and, at every new era, must be discussed again. Montesquieu confers on his heroes and great men the right of putting themselves to death when they see good; observing that it must stand at the will of every one to conclude the fifth act of his tragedy whenever he thinks best. Here, however, our business lies not with persons who, in activity, have led an important life, who have spent their days for some mighty empire, or for the cause of freedom; and whom one may forbear to censure, when, seeing the high ideal purpose which had inspired them vanish from the earth, they meditate pursuing it to that other undiscovered country. Our business here is with persons to whom, properly from want of activity, and in the peacefullest condition imaginable, life has nevertheless, by their exorbitant requisitions on themselves, become a burden. As I myself was in this predicament, and know best what pain I suffered in it, what efforts it cost me to escape from it, I shall not hide the speculations I, from time to time, considerately prosecuted, as to the various modes of death one had to choose from.

"It is something so unnatural for a man to break loose from himself, not only to hurt, but to annihilate himself, that he for the most part catches at means of a mechanical sort for putting his purpose in execution. When Ajax falls on his sword, it is the weight of his body that performs this service for him. When the warrior adjures his armour-bearer to slay him, rather than that he come into the hands of the enemy, this is likewise an external force which he secures for himself; only a moral instead of a physical one. Women seek in the water a cooling for their desperation; and the highly mechanical means of pistol-shooting insures a quick act with the smallest effort. Hanging is a death one mentions unwillingly, because it is an ignoble one. In England it may happen more readily than elsewhere, because from youth upwards you there see that punishment frequent without being specially ignominious. By poison, by opening of veins, men aim but at parting slowly from life; and the most refined, the speediest, the most painless death, by means of an asp, was worthy of a Queen who had spent her life in pomp and luxurious pleasure. All these, however, are external helps; are enemies, with which a man, that he may fight against himself, makes league.

"When I considered these various methods, and farther, looked abroad over history, I could find among all suicides no one that had gone about this deed with such greatness and freedom of spirit as the Emperor Otho. This man, beaten indeed as a general, yet nowise reduced to extremities, determines, for the good of the Empire, which already in some measure belonged to him, and for the saving of so many thousands, to leave

the world. With his friends he passes a gay festive night, and next morning it is found that with his own hand he has plunged a sharp dagger into his heart. This sole act seemed to me worthy of imitation; and I convinced myself that whoever could not proceed herein as Otho had done, was not entitled to resolve on renouncing life. By this conviction I saved myself from the purpose, or indeed more properly speaking, from the whim, of suicide, which in those fair peaceful times had insinuated itself into the mind of indolent youth. Among a considerable collection of arms, I possessed a costly well-ground dagger. This I laid down nightly beside my bed; and before extinguishing the light, I tried whether I could succeed in sending the sharp point an inch or two deep into my breast. But as I truly never could succeed, I at last took to laughing at myself; threw away all these hypochondriacal crotchets, and determined to live. To do this with cheerfulness, however, I required to have some poetical task given me, wherein all that I had felt, thought, or dreamed, on this weighty business might be spoken forth. With such view, I endeavoured to collect the elements which for a year or two had been floating about in me; I represented to myself the circumstances which had most oppressed and afflicted me; but nothing of all this would take form; there was wanting an incident, a fable, in which I might embody it.

"All at once I hear tidings of Jerusalem's death; and directly following the general rumour came the most precise and circumstantial description of the business; and in this instant the plan of *Werter* was invented: the whole shot together from all sides, and became a

solid mass; as the water in the vessel, which already stood on the point of freezing, is by the slightest motion changed at once into firm ice."

A wide and every way most important interval divides *Werter*, with its sceptical philosophy and "hypochondriacal crotchets," from Goethe's next Novel, *Wilhelm Meister's Apprenticeship*, published some twenty years afterwards. This work belongs, in all senses, to the second and sounder period of Goethe's life, and may indeed serve as the fullest, if perhaps not the purest, impress of it; being written with due forethought, at various times, during a period of no less than ten years. Considered as a piece of art, there were much to be said on *Meister*; all which, however, lies beyond our present purpose. We are here looking at the work chiefly as a document for the writer's history; and in this point of view it certainly seems, as contrasted with its more popular precursor, to deserve our best attention: for the problem which had been stated in *Werter*, with despair of its solution, is here solved. The lofty enthusiasm which, wandering wildly over the universe, found no resting place, has here reached its appointed home: and lives in harmony with what long appeared to threaten it with annihilation. Anarchy has now become Peace; the once gloomy and perturbed spirit is now serene, cheerfully vigorous, and rich in good fruits. Neither, which is most important of all, has this Peace been attained by a surrender to Necessity,

or any compact with Delusion; a seeming blessing, such as years and dispiritment will of themselves bring to most men, and which is indeed no blessing, since even continued battle is better than destruction or captivity; and peace of this sort is like that of Galgacus's Romans, who "called it peace when they had made a desert." Here the ardent high-aspiring youth has grown into the calmest man, yet with increase and not loss of ardour, and with aspirations higher as well as clearer. For he has conquered his unbelief; the Ideal has been built on the Actual; no longer floats vaguely in darkness and regions of dreams, but rests in light, on the firm ground of human interest and business, as in its true scene, on its true basis.

It is wonderful to see with what softness the scepticism of Jarno, the commercial spirit of Werner, the reposing polished manhood of Lothario and the Uncle, the unearthly enthusiasm of the Harper, the gay animal vivacity of Philina, the mystic, ethereal, almost spiritual nature of Mignon, are blended together in this work; how justice is done to each, how each lives freely in his proper element, in his proper form; and how, as Wilhelm himself, the mild-hearted, all-hoping, all-believing Wilhelm, struggles forwards towards his world of art through these curiously complected influences, all this unites itself into a multifarious, yet so harmonious Whole; as into a clear poetic mirror, where man's life and business in this age, his passions and

purposes, the highest equally with the lowest, are imaged back to us in beautiful significance. Poetry and Prose are no longer at variance; for the poet's eyes are opened: he sees the changes of many-coloured existence, and sees the loveliness and deep purport which lies hidden under the very meanest of them; hidden to the vulgar sight, but clear to the poet's; because the "open secret" is no longer a secret to him, and he knows that the Universe is *full* of goodness; that whatever has being has beauty.

Apart from its literary merits or demerits, such is the temper of mind we trace in Goethe's *Meister*, and, more or less expressively exhibited, in all his later works. We reckon it a rare phenomenon, this temper; and worthy, in our times, if it do exist, of best study from all inquiring men. How has such a temper been attained in this so lofty and impetuous mind, once too, dark, desolate, and full of doubt, more than any other? How may we, each of us in his several sphere, attain it, or strengthen it, for ourselves? These are questions, this last is a question, in which no one is unconcerned.

To answer these questions, to begin the answer of them, would lead us very far beyond our present limits. It is not, as we believe, without long, sedulous study, without learning much and unlearning much, that, for any man, the answer of such questions is even to be hoped. Meanwhile, as regards Goethe, there is one feature of the business which, to us, throws

considerable light on his moral persuasions, and will not, in investigating the secret of them, be overlooked. We allude to the spirit in which he cultivates his Art; the noble, disinterested, almost religious love with which he looks on Art in general, and strives towards it as towards the sure, highest, nay, only good. We extract one passage from *Wilhelm Meister*: it may pass for a piece of fine declamation, but not in that light do we offer it here. Strange, unaccountable as the thing may seem, we have actually evidence before our mind that Goethe believes in such doctrines, nay, has in some sort lived and endeavoured to direct his conduct by them.

"'Look at men,' continues Wilhelm, 'how they struggle after happiness and satisfaction! Their wishes, their toil, their gold, are ever hunting restlessly; and after what? After that which the Poet has received from nature; the right enjoyment of the world; the feeling of himself in others; the harmonious conjunction of many things that will seldom go together.

"'What is it that keeps men in continual discontent and agitation? It is that they cannot make realities correspond with their conceptions, that enjoyment steals away from among their hands, that the wished-for comes too late, and nothing reached and acquired produces on the heart the effect which their longing for it at a distance led them to anticipate. Now fate has exalted the Poet above all this, as if he were a god. He views the conflicting tumult of the passions; sees families and kingdoms raging in aimless commotion; sees those perplexed enigmas of misunderstanding, which often a single

syllable would explain, occasioning convulsions unutterably baleful. He has a fellow-feeling of the mournful and the joyful in the fate of all mortals. When the man of the world is devoting his days to wasting melancholy for some deep disappointment; or, in the ebullience of joy, is going out to meet his happy destiny, the lightly-moved and all-conceiving spirit of the Poet steps forth, like the sun from night to day, and with soft transition tunes his harp to joy or woe. From his heart, its native soil, springs the fair flower of Wisdom; and if others while waking dream, and are pained with fantastic delusions from their every sense, he passes the dream of life like one awake, and the strangest event is to him nothing, save a part of the past and of the future. And thus the Poet is a teacher, a prophet, a friend of gods and men. How! Thou wouldst have him descend from his height to some paltry occupation? He who is fashioned, like a bird, to hover round the world, to nestle on the lofty summits, to feed on flowers and fruits, exchanging gaily one bough for another, *he* ought also to work at the plough like an ox; like a dog to train himself to the harness and draught; or perhaps, tied up in a chain, to guard a farm-yard by his barking?'

"Werner, it may well be supposed, had listened with the greatest surprise. 'All true,' he rejoined, 'if men were but made like birds; and, though they neither span nor weaved, could spend peaceful days in perpetual enjoyment: if, at the approach of winter, they could as easily betake themselves to distant regions; could retire before scarcity, and fortify themselves against frost.'

"'Poets have lived so,' exclaimed Wilhelm, 'in times when true nobleness was better reverenced; and so should

they ever live. Sufficiently provided for within, they had need of little from without; the gift of imparting lofty emotions, and glorious images to men, in melodies and words that charmed the ear, and fixed themselves inseparably on whatever they might touch, of old enraptured the world, and served the gifted as a rich inheritance. At the courts of kings, at the tables of the great, under the windows of the fair, the sound of them was heard, while the ear and the soul were shut for all beside; and men felt, as we do when delight comes over us, and we pause with rapture if, among the dingles we are crossing, the voice of the nightingale starts out, touching and strong. They found a home in every habitation of the world, and the lowliness of their condition but exalted them the more. The hero listened to their songs, and the Conqueror of the Earth did reverence to a Poet; for he felt that, without poets, his own wild and vast existence would pass away like a whirlwind, and be forgotten for ever. The lover wished that he could feel his longings and his joys so variedly and so harmoniously as the Poet's inspired lips had skill to show them forth; and even the rich man could not of himself discern such costliness in his idol grandeurs, as when they were presented to him shining in the splendour of the Poet's spirit, sensible to all worth, and ennobling all. Nay, if thou wilt have it, who but the Poet was it that first formed Gods for us; that exalted us to them, and brought them down to us?'"

For a man of Goethe's talent to write many such pieces of rhetoric, setting forth the dignity of poets, and their innate independence on external circumstances,

could be no very hard task; accordingly, we find such sentiments again and again expressed, sometimes with still more gracefulness, still clearer emphasis, in his various writings. But to adopt these sentiments into his sober practical persuasion; in any measure to feel and believe that such was still, and must always be, the high vocation of the poet; on this ground of universal humanity, of ancient and now almost forgotten nobleness, to take his stand, even in these trivial, jeering, withered, unbelieving days; and through all their complex, dispiriting, mean, yet tumultuous influences, to "make his light shine before men," that it might beautify even our "rag-gathering age" with some beams of that mild, divine splendour. which had long left us, the very possibility of which was denied: heartily and in earnest to meditate all this, was no common proceeding; to bring it into practice, especially in such a life as his had been, was among the highest and hardest enterprises which any man whatever could engage in. We reckon this a greater novelty than all the novelties which as a mere writer he ever put forth, whether for praise or censure. We have taken it upon us to say that if such *is*, in any sense, the state of the case with regard to Goethe, he deserves not mere approval as a pleasing poet and sweet singer; but deep, grateful study, observance, imitation, as a Moralist and Philosopher. If there be any *probability* that such is the state of the case, we

cannot but reckon it a matter well worthy of being inquired into. And it is for this only that we are here pleading and arguing.

On the literary merit and meaning of *Wilhelm Meister* we have already said that we must not enter at present. The book has been translated into English: it underwent the usual judgment from our Reviews and Magazines; was to some a stone of stumbling, to others foolishness, to most an object of wonder. On the whole it passed smoothly through the critical Assaying-house; for the Assayers have Christian dispositions, and very little time; so *Meister* was ranked, without umbrage, among the legal coin of the Minerva Press; and allowed to circulate as copper currency among the rest. That in so quick a process, a German *Friedrich d'or* might not slip through unnoticed among new and equally brilliant British brass Farthings, there is no warranting. For our critics can now criticise *impromptu*, which, though far the readiest, is nowise the surest plan. *Meister* is the mature product of the first genius of our times; and must, one would think, be different, in various respects, from the immature products of geniuses who are far from the first; and whose works spring from the brain in as many weeks as Goethe's cost him years.

Nevertheless, we quarrel with no man's verdict; for Time, which tries all things, will try this also, and

bring to light the truth, both as regards criticism and thing criticised; or sink both into final darkness, which likewise will be the truth as regards them. But there is one censure which we must advert to for a moment, so singular does it seem to us. *Meister*, it appears, is a "vulgar" work; no "gentleman," we hear in certain circles, could have written it; few real gentlemen, it is insinuated, can like to read it; no real lady, unless possessed of considerable courage, should profess having read it at all. Of Goethe's "gentility" we shall leave all men to speak that have any, even the faintest knowledge of him; and with regard to the gentility of his readers, state only the following fact. Most of us have heard of the late Queen of Prussia, and know whether or not she was genteel enough, and of real ladyhood: nay, if we must prove everything, her character can be read in the *Life of Napoleon*, by Sir Walter Scott, who passes for a judge of those matters. And yet this is what we find written in the *Kunst und Alterthum* for 1824:

"Books too have their past happiness, which no chance can take away:

> " *Wer nie sein Brod mit Thränen ass,*
> *Wer nicht die kummervollen Nächte*
> *Auf seinem Bette weinend sass,*
> *Der kennt euch nicht, ihr himmlischen Mächte.*

"These heart-broken lines a highly noble-minded, venerated Queen repeated in the cruellest exile, when cast

forth to boundless misery. She made herself familiar with the Book in which these words, with many other painful experiences, are communicated, and drew from it a melancholy consolation. This influence, stretching of itself into boundless time, what is there that can obliterate?"

Here are strange diversities of taste; "national discrepancies" enough, had we time to investigate them! Nevertheless, wishing each party to retain his own special persuasions, so far as they are honest, and adapted to his intellectual position, national or individual, we cannot but believe that there is an inward and essential Truth in Art; a Truth far deeper than the dictates of mere Mode, and which, could we pierce through these dictates, would be true for all nations and all men. To arrive at this Truth, distant from every one at first, approachable by most, attainable by some small number, is the end and aim of all real study of Poetry. For such a purpose, among others, the comparison of English with foreign judgment, on works that will bear judging, forms no unprofitable help. Some day, we may translate Friedrich Schlegel's essay on *Meister*, by way of contrast to our English animadversions on that subject. Schlegel's praise, whatever ours might do, rises sufficiently high: neither does he seem, during twenty years, to have repented of what he said; for we observe in the edition of his works, at present publishing, he repeats the whole

Character, and even appends to it, in a separate sketch, some new assurances and elucidations.

It may deserve to be mentioned here that *Meister*, at its first appearance in Germany, was received very much as it has been in England. Goethe's known character, indeed, precluded indifference there; but otherwise it was much the same. The whole guild of criticism was thrown into perplexity, into sorrow; everywhere was dissatisfaction open or concealed. Official duty impelling them to speak, some said one thing, some another; all felt in secret that they knew not what to say. Till the appearance of Schlegel's *Character*, no word, that we have seen, of the smallest chance to be decisive, or indeed to last beyond the day, had been uttered regarding it. Some regretted that the fire of *Werter* was so wonderfully abated; whisperings there might be about "lowness," "heaviness," some spake forth boldly in behalf of suffering "virtue." Novalis was not among the speakers, but he censured the work in secret, and this for a reason which to us will seem the strangest; for its being, as we should say, a Benthamite work! Many are the bitter aphorisms we find, among his Fragments, directed against *Meister* for its prosaic, mechanical, economical, coldhearted, altogether Utilitarian character. We English, again, call Goethe a mystic: so difficult is it to please all parties! But the good, deep, noble Novalis made the fairest

amends; for notwithstanding all this, Tieck tells us, if we remember rightly, he regularly perused *Meister* twice a year.

On a somewhat different ground proceeded quite another sort of assault from one Pustkucher of Quedlinburg. Herr Pustkucher felt afflicted, it would seem, at the want of Patriotism and Religion too manifest in *Meister*; and determined to take what vengeance he could. By way of sequel to the *Apprenticeship*, Goethe had announced his *Wilhelm Meisters Wanderjahre* as in a state of preparation; but the book still lingered: whereupon, in the interim, forth comes this Pustkucher with a pseudo-*Wanderjahre* of his own; satirising, according to ability, the spirit and principles of the *Apprenticeship*. We have seen an epigram on Pustkucher and his *Wanderjahre*, attributed, with what justice we know not, to Goethe himself: whether it is his or not, it is written in his name; and seems to express accurately enough for such a purpose the relation between the parties—in language which we had rather not translate:

Will denn von Quedlinburg aus
Ein neuer Wanderer traben?
Hat doch die Wallfisch seine Laus,
Muss auch die meine haben.

So much for Pustkucher, and the rest. The true *Wanderjahre* has at length appeared: the first volume

has been before the world since 1821. This Fragment, for it still continues such, is in our view one of the most perfect pieces of composition that Goethe has ever produced. We have heard something of his being at present engaged in extending or completing it: what the whole may in his hands become, we are anxious to see; but the *Wanderjahre*, even in its actual state, can hardly be called unfinished, as a piece of writing; it coheres so beautifully within itself; and yet we see not whence the wondrous landscape came, or whither it is stretching; but it hangs before us as a fairy region, hiding its borders on this side in light sunny clouds, fading away on that into the infinite azure: already, we might almost say, it gives us the notion of a *completed fragment*, or the state in which a fragment, not meant for completion, might be left.

But apart from its environment, and considered merely in itself, this *Wanderjahre* seems to us a most estimable work. There is, in truth, a singular gracefulness in it; a high, melodious Wisdom; so light is it, yet so earnest; so calm, so gay, yet so strong and deep: for the purest spirit of all Art rests over it and breathes through it; "mild Wisdom is wedded in living union to Harmony divine;" the Thought of the Sage is melted, we might say, and incorporated in the liquid music of the Poet. "It is called a Romance," observes the English Translator; "but it treats not of

romance characters or subjects; it "has less relation to Fielding's *Tom Jones* than to Spenser's *Faery Queen.*" We have not forgotten what is due to Spenser; yet, perhaps, beside his immortal allegory this *Wanderjahre* may, in fact, not unfairly be named; and with this advantage, that it is an allegory not of the seventeenth century, but of the nineteenth; a picture full of expressiveness, of what men are striving for, and ought to strive for, in these actual days. "The scene," we are further told, "is not laid on this firm earth; but in a fair Utopia of Art and Science and free Activity; the figures, light and aëriform, come unlooked for, and melt away abruptly, like the pageants of Prospero in his Enchanted Island." We venture to add, that, like Prospero's Island, this too is drawn from the inward depths, the purest sphere of poetic inspiration: ever, as we read it, the images of old Italian Art flit before us; the gay tints of Titian; the quaint grace of Domenichino; sometimes the clear yet unfathomable depth of Rafaelle; and whatever else we have known or dreamed of in that rich old genial world.

As it is Goethe's moral sentiments, and culture as a man, that we have made our chief object in this survey, we would fain give some adequate specimen of the *Wanderjahre*, where, as appears to us, these are to be traced in their last degree of clearness and completeness. But to do this, to find a specimen that

should be adequate, were difficult, or rather impossible. How shall we divide what is in itself one and indivisible? How shall the fraction of a complex picture give us any idea of the so beautiful whole? Nevertheless, we shall refer our readers to the Tenth and Eleventh Chapters of the *Wanderjahre*; where, in poetic and symbolic style, they will find a sketch of the nature, objects, and present ground of Religious Belief, which, if they have ever reflected duly on that matter, will hardly fail to interest them. They will find these chapters, if we mistake not, worthy of deep consideration; for this is the merit of Goethe: his maxims will bear study; nay, they require it, and improve by it more and more. They come from the depths of his mind, and are not in their place till they have reached the depths of ours. The wisest man, we believe, may see in them a reflex of his own wisdom: but to him who is still learning, they become as seeds of knowledge; they take root in the mind, and ramify, as we meditate them, into a whole garden of thought. The sketch we mentioned is far too long for being extracted here; however, we give some scattered portions of it, which the reader will accept with fair allowance. As the wild suicidal night-thoughts of *Werter* formed our first extract, this by way of counterpart may be the last. We must fancy Wilhelm in the "Pedagogic province," proceeding towards the "Chief, or the Three," with intent to place his son under their charge,

in that wonderful region, "where he was to see so many singularities."

"Wilhelm had already noticed that in the cut and colour of the young people's clothes a variety prevailed, which gave the whole tiny population a peculiar aspect. he was about to question his attendant on this point, when a still stranger observation forced itself upon him: all the children, how employed soever, laid down their work, and turned, with singular yet diverse gestures, towards the party riding past them; or rather, as it was easy to infer, towards the Overseer, who was in it. The youngest laid their arms crosswise over their breasts, and looked cheerfully up to the sky; those of middle size held their hands on their backs, and looked smiling on the ground; the eldest stood with a frank and spirited air—their arms stretched down, they turned their heads to the right, and formed themselves into a line; whereas the others kept separate, each where he chanced to be.

"The riders having stopped and dismounted here, as several children, in their various modes, were standing forth to be inspected by the Overseer, Wilhelm asked the meaning of these gestures; but Felix struck in, and cried gaily: 'What posture am I to take, then?'—'Without doubt,' said the Overseer, 'the first posture: the arms over the breast, the face earnest and cheerful towards the sky.' Felix obeyed, but soon cried: 'This is not much to my taste; I see nothing up there: does it last long? But yes!' exclaimed he joyfully, 'yonder are a pair of falcons flying from the west to the east: that is a good sign too!'—'As thou takest it, as thou behavest,' said the other: 'Now mingle among them as they

mingle.' He gave a signal, and the children left their postures, and again betook them to work or sport as before."

Wilhelm a second time "asks the meaning of these gestures;" but the Overseer is not at liberty to throw much light on the matter: mentions only that they are symbolical, "nowise mere grimaces, but have a moral purport, which perhaps the Chief or the Three may farther explain to him." The children themselves, it would seem, only know it in part; "secrecy having many advantages; for when you tell a man at once and straightforward the purpose of any object, he fancies there is nothing in it." By-and-by, however, having left Felix by the way, and parted with the Overseer, Wilhelm arrives at the abode of the Three, "who preside over sacred things," and from whom farther satisfaction is to be looked for.

"Wilhelm had now reached the gate of a wooded vale, surrounded with high walls: on a certain sign, the little door opened, and a man of earnest, imposing look received our traveller. The latter found himself in a large, beautifully umbrageous space, decked with the richest foliage, shaded with trees and bushes of all sorts; while stately walls and magnificent buildings were discerned only in glimpses through this thick natural boscage. A friendly reception from the Three, who by-and-by appeared, at last turned into a general conversation, the substance of which we now present in an abbreviated shape.

"'Since you intrust your son to us,' said they, 'it is fair that we admit you to a closer view of our procedure. Of what is external you have seen much that does not bear its meaning on its front. What part of this do you wish to have explained?'

"'Dignified yet singular gestures of salutation I have noticed; the import of which I would gladly learn: with you, doubtless, the exterior has a reference to the interior, and inversely; let me know what this reference is.'

"'Well-formed, healthy children,' replied the Three, 'bring much into the world along with them; Nature has given to each whatever he requires for time and duration; to unfold this is our duty; often it unfolds itself better of its own accord. One thing there is, however, which no child brings into the world with him; and yet it is on this one thing that all depends, for making man in every point a man. If you can discover it yourself, speak it out.' Wilhelm thought a little while, then shook his head.

"The Three, after a suitable pause, exclaimed, 'Reverence!' Wilhelm seemed to hesitate. 'Reverence!' cried they a second time. 'All want it; perhaps yourself.'

"'Three kinds of gestures you have seen: and we inculcate a threefold reverence, which, when commingled and formed into one whole, attains its full force and effect. The first is Reverence for what is Above us. That posture, the arms crossed over the breast, the look turned joyfully towards heaven; that is what we have enjoined on young children; requiring from them thereby a testimony that there is a God above, who images and reveals himself in parents, teachers, superiors. Then comes the second—reverence for what is Under us. Those

hands folded over the back, and, as it were, tied together: that down-turned smiling look, announce that we are to regard the earth with attention and cheerfulness: from the bounty of the earth we are nourished; the earth affords unutterable joys, but disproportionate sorrows it also brings us. Should one of our children do himself external hurt, blameably or blamelessly; should others hurt him accidentally or purposely; should dead involuntary matter do him hurt; then let him well consider it, for such dangers will attend him all his days. But from this posture we delay not to free our pupil, the instant we become convinced that the instruction connected with it has produced sufficient influence on him. Then, on the contrary, we bid him gather courage, and turning to his comrades, range himself along with them. Now, at last, he stands forth, frank and bold; not selfishly isolated; only in combination with his equals does he front the world. Farther, we have nothing to add.'

"'I see a glimpse of it!' said Wilhelm. 'Are not the mass of men so marred and stinted, because they take pleasure only in the element of evil-wishing and evil-speaking? Whoever gives himself to this, soon comes to be indifferent towards God, contemptuous towards the world, spiteful towards his equals; and the true, genuine, indispensable sentiment of self-estimation corrupts into self-conceit and presumption. Allow me, however,' continued he, 'to state one difficulty. You say that reverence is not natural to man: now has not the reverence or fear of rude people for violent convulsions of nature, or other inexplicable mysteriously foreboding occurrences, been heretofore regarded as the germ out of which a higher

feeling, a purer sentiment, was by degrees to be developed ?'

"'Nature is indeed adequate to fear,' replied they, 'but to reverence not adequate. Men fear a known or unknown powerful being; the strong seeks to conquer it, the weak to avoid it; both endeavour to get quit of it, and feel themselves happy when for a short season they have put it aside, and their nature has in some degree restored itself to freedom and independence. The natural man repeats this operation millions of times in the course of his life; from fear he struggles to freedom; from freedom he is driven back to fear, and so makes no advancement. To fear is easy, but grievous; to reverence is difficult, but satisfactory. Man does not willingly submit himself to reverence, or rather he never so submits himself: it is a higher sense which must be communicated to his nature: which only in some favoured individuals unfolds itself spontaneously, who on this account too have of old been looked upon as Saints and Gods. Here lies the worth, here lies the business of all true Religions, whereof there are likewise only three, according to the objects towards which they direct our devotion.'

"The men paused; Wilhelm reflected for a time in silence; but feeling in himself no pretension to unfold these strange words, he requested the Sages to proceed with their exposition. They immediately complied. 'No Religion that grounds itself on fear,' said they, 'is regarded among us. With the reverence to which a man should give dominion in his mind, he can, in paying honour, keep his own honour; he is not disunited with himself as in the former case. The Religion which

depends on Reverence for what is Above us, we denominate the Ethnic ; it is the Religion of the Nations, and the first happy deliverance from a degrading fear : all Heathen religions, as we call them, are of this sort, whatsoever names they may bear. The Second Religion, which founds itself on Reverence for what is Around us, we denominate the Philosophical ; for the Philosopher stations himself in the middle, and must draw down to him all that is higher, and up to him all that is lower, and only in this medium condition does he merit the title of Wise. Here as he surveys with clear sight his relation to his equals, and therefore to the whole human race, his relation likewise to all other earthly circumstances and arrangements. necessary or accidental, he alone, in a cosmic sense, lives in Truth. But now we have to speak of the Third Religion, grounded on Reverence for what is Under us : this we name the Christian ; as in the Christian Religion such a temper is the most distinctly manifested : it is a last step to which mankind were fitted and destined to attain. But what a task was it, not only to be patient with the Earth, and let it lie beneath us, we appealing to a higher birthplace ; but also to recognise humility and poverty, mockery and despite, disgrace and wretchedness, suffering and death, to recognise these things as divine ; nay, even on sin and crime to look not as hindrances, but to honour and love them as furtherances of what is holy. Of this, indeed, we find some traces in all ages : but the trace is not the goal ; and this being now attained, the human species cannot retrograde ; and we may say that the Christian Religion, having once appeared, cannot again vanish ; having once assumed its divine shape, can be subject to no dissolution.'

"'To which of these Religions do you specially adhere?' inquired Wilhelm.

"'To all the three,' replied they; 'for in their union they produce what may properly be called the true Religion. Out of those three Reverences springs the highest Reverence, Reverence for Oneself, and these again unfold themselves from this; so that man attains the highest elevation of which he is capable—that of being justified in reckoning himself the Best that God and Nature have produced; nay, of being able to continue on this lofty eminence, without being again by self-conceit and presumption drawn down from it into the vulgar level.'"

The Three undertake to admit him into the interior of their Sanctuary; whither, accordingly, he, "at the hand of the Eldest," proceeds on the morrow. Sorry are we that we cannot follow them into the "octagonal hall," so full of paintings, and the "gallery open on one side, and stretching round a spacious, gay, flowery garden." It is a beautiful, figurative representation, by pictures and symbols of Art, of the First and the Second Religions, the Ethnic and the Philosophical; for the former of which the pictures have been composed from the Old Testament; for the latter from the New. We can only make room for some small portions.

"'I observe,' said Wilhelm, 'you have done the Israelites the honour to select their history as the groundwork of this delineation, or rather you have made it the leading object there.'

"'As you see,' replied the Eldest; 'for you will remark, that on the socles and friezes we have introduced another series of transactions and occurrences, not so much of a synchronistic as of a symphronistic kind; since, among all nations, we discover records of a similar import, and grounded on the same facts. Thus you perceive here, while, in the main field of the picture, Abraham receives a visit from his gods in the form of fair youths, Apollo among the herdsmen of Admetus is painted above on the frieze. From which we may learn, that the gods, when they appear to men, are commonly unrecognised of them.'

"The friends walked on. Wilhelm, for the most part, met with well-known objects; but they were here exhibited in a livelier, more expressive manner, than he had been used to see them. On some few matters he requested explanation, and at last could not help returning to his former question: 'Why the Israelitish history had been chosen in preference to all others?'

"The Eldest answered: 'Among all Heathen religions, for such also is the Israelitish, this has the most distinguished advantages; of which I shall mention only a few. At the Ethnic judgment-seat; at the judgment-seat of the God of Nations, it is not asked whether this is the best, the most excellent nation; but whether it lasts, whether it has continued. The Israelitish people never was good for much, as its own leaders, judges, rulers, prophets, have a thousand times reproachfully declared; it possesses few virtues, and most of the faults of other nations: but in cohesion, steadfastness, valour, and when all this would not serve, in obstinate toughness, it has no match. It is the most perseverant nation in the world; it is, it was, and it will be, to glorify the name of Jehovah

through all ages. We have set it up, therefore, as the pattern figure; as the main figure, to which the others only serve as a frame.'

"'It becomes not me to dispute with you,' said Wilhelm, 'since you have instruction to impart. Open to me, therefore, the other advantages of this people, or rather of its history, of its religion.'

"'One chief advantage,' said the other, 'is its excellent collection of Sacred Books. These stand so happily combined together, that even out of the most diverse elements, the feeling of a whole still rises before us. They are complete enough to satisfy: fragmentary enough to excite; barbarous enough to rouse; tender enough to appease; and for how many other contradicting merits might not these Books, might not this one Book, be praised?'

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"Thus wandering on, they had now reached the gloomy and perplexed periods of the History, the destruction of the City and the Temple, the murder, exile, slavery of whole masses of this stiffnecked people. Its subsequent fortunes were delineated in a cunning, allegorical way; a real historical delineation of them would have lain without the limits of true Art.

"At this point the gallery abruptly terminated in a closed door, and Wilhelm was surprised to see himself already at the end. 'In your historical series,' said he, 'I find a chasm. You have destroyed the Temple of Jerusalem, and dispersed the people; yet you have not introduced the divine Man who taught there shortly before; to whom, shortly before, they would give no ear.'

"'To have done this, as you require it, would have been an error. The life of that divine Man, whom you allude

to, stands in no connection with the general history of the world in His time. It was a private life; His teaching was a teaching for individuals. What has publicly befallen vast masses of people, and the minor parts which compose them, belongs to the general History of the World, to the general Religion of the World; the Religion we have named the First. What inwardly befalls individuals belongs to the Second Religion—the Philosophical: such a Religion was it that Christ taught and practised, so long as He went about on Earth. For this reason, the external here closes, and I now open to you the internal."

"A door went back, and they entered a similar gallery; where Wilhelm soon recognised a corresponding series of pictures from the New Testament. They seemed as if by another hand than the first: all was softer; forms, movements, accompaniments, light, and colouring."

Into this second gallery, with its strange doctrine about "Miracles and Parables," the characteristic of the Philosophical Religion, we cannot enter for the present, yet must give one hurried glance. Wilhelm expresses some surprise that these delineations terminate "with the Supper, with the scene where the Master and his Disciples part." He inquires for the remaining portion of the history.

"'In all sorts of instruction,' said the Eldest, 'in all sorts of communication, we are fond of separating whatever it is possible to separate; for by this means alone can the notion of importance and peculiar significance arise in the young mind. Actual experience of itself

mingles and mixes all things together: here, accordingly, we have entirely disjoined that sublime Man's life from its termination. In life, he appears as a true Philosopher —let not the expression stagger you—as a Wise Man in the highest sense. He stands firm to his point; he goes on his way inflexibly, and while he exalts the lower to himself, while he makes the ignorant, the poor, the sick partakers of his wisdom, of his riches, of his strength, he, on the other hand, in nowise conceals his divine origin: he dares to equal himself with God, nay, to declare that he himself is God. In this manner he is wont, from youth upwards, to astound his familiar friends; of these he gains a part to his own cause; irritates the rest against him; and shows to all men, who are aiming at a certain elevation in doctrine and life, what they have to look for from the world. And thus, for the noble portion of mankind, his walk and conversation are even more instructive and profitable than his death: for to those trials every one is called, to this trial but a few. Now, omitting all that results from this consideration, do but look at the touching scene of the Last Supper. Here the Wise Man, as it ever is, leaves those that are his own utterly orphaned behind him; and while he is careful for the Good, he feeds along with them a traitor, by whom he and the Better are to be destroyed.'"

This seems to us to have "a deep, still meaning;" and the longer and closer we examine it, the more it pleases us. Wilhelm is not admitted into the shrine of the Third Religion, the Christian, or that of which Christ's sufferings and death were the symbol, as his walk and conversation had been the symbol of the

Second, or Philosophical Religion. "That last Religion," it is said—

"'That last Religion, which arises from the Reverence of what is Beneath us; that veneration of the contradictory, the hated, the avoided, we give to each of our pupils, in small portions, by way of outfit, along with him into the world, merely that he may know where more is to be had, should such a want spring up within him. I invite you to return hither at the end of a year, to attend our general Festival, and see how far your son is advanced: then shall you be admitted into the Sanctuary of Sorrow.'

"'Permit me one question,' said Wilhelm: 'As you have set up the life of this divine Man for a pattern and example, have you likewise selected his sufferings, his death as a model of exalted patience?'

"'Undoubtedly we have,' replied the Eldest. 'Of this we make no secret; but we draw a veil over those sufferings, even because we reverence them so highly. We hold it a damnable audacity to bring forth that torturing Cross, and the Holy One who suffers on it, or to expose them to the light of the Sun, which hid its face when a reckless world forced such a sight on it; to take these mysterious secrets, in which the divine depth of Sorrow lies hid, and play with them, fondle them, trick them out, and rest not till the most reverend of all solemnities appears vulgar and paltry. Let so much for the present suffice——* * * The rest we must still owe you for a twelvemonth. The instruction, which in the interim we give the children, no stranger is allowed to witness: then, however, come to us, and you will hear what our best Speakers think it serviceable to make public on those matters.'"

Could we hope that, in its present disjointed state, this emblematic sketch would rise before the minds of our readers in any measure as it stood before the mind of the writer; that, in considering it, they might seize only an outline of those many meanings which, at less or greater depth, lie hidden under it, we should anticipate their thanks for having, a first or a second time, brought it before them. As it is, believing that, to open-minded truth-seeking men, the deliberate words of an open-minded truth-seeking man can in no case be wholly unintelligible, nor the words of such a man as Goethe indifferent, we have transcribed it for their perusal. If we induce them to turn to the original, and study this in its completeness, with so much else that environs it and bears on it, they will thank us still more. To our own judgment, at least, there is a fine and pure significance in this whole delineation: such phrases even as the "Sanctuary of Sorrow," the "divine depth of Sorrow," have of themselves a pathetic wisdom for us; as indeed a tone of devoutness, of calm, mild, priest-like dignity pervades the whole. In a time like ours it is rare to see, in the writings of cultivated men, any opinion whatever bearing any mark of sincerity on such a subject as this: yet it is and continues the highest subject, and they that are highest are most fit for studying it, and helping others to study it.

Goethe's *Wanderjahre* was published in his seventy-

second year; *Werter* in his twenty-fifth: thus in passing between these two works, and over *Meisters Lehrjahre*, which stands nearly midway, we have glanced over a space of almost fifty years, including within them, of course, whatever was most important in his public or private history. By means of these quotations, so diverse in their tone, we meant to make it visible that a great change had taken place in the moral disposition of the man; a change from inward imprisonment, doubt and discontent, into freedom, belief, and clear activity: such a change as, in our opinion, must take place, more or less consciously, in every character that, especially in these times, attains to spiritual manhood; and in characters possessing any thoughtfulness and sensibility, will seldom take place without a too painful consciousness, without bitter conflicts, in which the character itself is too often maimed and impoverished, and which end too often not in victory, but in defeat, or fatal compromise with the enemy. Too often, we may well say; for though many gird on the harness, few bear it warrior-like; still fewer put it off with triumph. Among our own poets, Byron was almost the only man we saw faithfully and manfully struggling, to the end, in this cause; and he died while the victory was still doubtful, or, at best, only beginning to be gained. We have already stated our opinion, that Goethe's success in this matter has been more complete than that of any other man in his age;

nay, that, in the strictest sense, he may almost be called the only one that has so succeeded. On this ground, were it on no other, we have ventured to say, that his spiritual history and procedure must deserve attention; that his opinions, his creations, his mode of thought, his whole picture of the world as it dwells within him, must to his contemporaries be an inquiry of no common interest; of an interest altogether peculiar, and not in this degree exampled in existing literature. These things can be but imperfectly stated here, and must be left, not in a state of demonstration, but, at the utmost, of loose fluctuating probability; nevertheless, if inquired into, they will be found to have a precise enough meaning, and, as we believe, a highly important one.

For the rest, what sort of mind it is that has passed through this change, that has gained this victory; how rich and high a mind; how learned by study in all that is wisest, by experience in all that is most complex, the brightest as well as the blackest, in man's existence; gifted with what insight, with what grace and power of utterance, we shall not for the present attempt discussing. All these the reader will learn, who studies his writings with such attention as they merit: and by no other means. Of Goethe's dramatic, lyrical, didactic poems, in their thousandfold expressiveness, for they are full of expressiveness, we can here say nothing. But in every department of

Literature, of Art ancient and modern, in many provinces of Science, we shall often meet him; and hope to have other occasions of estimating what, in these respects, we and all men owe him.

Two circumstances, meanwhile, we have remarked, which to us throw light on the nature of his original faculty for Poetry, and go far to convince us of the Mastery he has attained in that art: these we may here state briefly, for the judgment of such as already know his writings, or the help of such as are beginning to know them. The first is, his singularly emblematic intellect; his perpetual never-failing tendency to transform into *shape*, into *life*, the opinion, the feeling that may dwell in him; which, in its widest sense, we reckon to be essentially the grand problem of the Poet. We do not mean mere metaphor and rhetorical trope: these are but the exterior concern, often but the scaffolding of the edifice, which is to be built up (within our thoughts) by means of them. In allusions, in similitudes, though no one known to us is happier, many are more copious, than Goethe. But we find this faculty of his in the very essence of his intellect; and trace it alike in the quiet cunning epigram, the allegory, the quaint device, reminding us of some Quarles or Bunyan; and in the *Fausts*, the *Tassos*, the *Mignons*, which, in their pure and genuine personality, may almost remind us of the *Ariels* and *Hamlets* of Shakspeare. Everything has form, everything has visual existence; the poet's

imagination *bodies forth* the forms of things unseen, his pen turns them to *shape.* This, as a natural endowment, exists in Goethe, we conceive, to a very high degree.

'The other characteristic of his mind, which proves to us his acquired mastery in art, as this shows us the extent of his original capacity for it, is his wonderful variety, nay universality; his entire freedom from Mannerism. We read Goethe for years before we come to see wherein the distinguishing peculiarity of his understanding, of his disposition, even of his way of writing, consists. It seems quite a simple style, that of his; remarkable chiefly for its calmness, its perspicuity, in short its commonness; and yet it is the most uncommon of all styles: we feel as if every one might imitate it, and yet it is inimitable. As hard is it to discover in his writings—though there also, as in every man's writings, the character of the writer must lie recorded—what sort of spiritual construction he has, what are his temper, his affections, his individual specialities. For all lives freely within him: Philina and Clärchen, Mephistopheles and Mignon, are alike indifferent or alike dear to him; he is of no sect or caste: he seems not this man, or that man, but a man. We reckon this to be the characteristic of a Master in Art of any sort; and true especially of all great Poets. How true is it of Shakspeare and Homer! Who knows or can figure what the Man Shakspeare was, by the

first, by the twentieth perusal of his works? He is a Voice coming to us from the Land of Melody: his old brick dwelling-place, in the mere earthly burgh of Stratford-on-Avon, offers us the most inexplicable enigma. And what is Homer in the *Ilias?* He is THE WITNESS; he has seen, and he reveals it; we hear and believe, but do not behold him. Now compare, with these two poets, any other two; not of equal genius, for there are none such, but of equal sincerity, who wrote as earnestly, and from the heart, like them. Take, for instance, Jean Paul and Lord Byron. The good Richter begins to show himself in his broad, massive, kindly, quaint significance, before we have read many pages of even his slightest work; and to the last he paints himself much better than his subject. Byron may also be said to have painted nothing else than himself, be his subject what it might. Yet as a test for the culture of a Poet, in his poetical capacity, for his pretensions to mastery and completeness in his art, we cannot but reckon this among the surest. Tried by this, there is no living writer that approaches within many degrees of Goethe.

Thus, it would seem, we consider Goethe to be a richly educated Poet, no less than a richly educated Man; a master both of Humanity and of Poetry; one to whom Experience has given true wisdom, and the "Melodies Eternal" a perfect utterance for his wisdom. Of the particular form which this humanity, this

wisdom has assumed; of his opinions, character, personality—for these. with whatever difficulty, are and must be decipherable in his writings—we had much to say: but this also we must decline. In the present state of matters, to speak adequately would be a task too hard for us, and one in which our readers could afford little help, nay, in which many of them might take little interest. Meanwhile, we have found a brief cursory sketch on this subject, already written in our language: some parts of it, by way of preparation, we shall here transcribe. It is written by a professed admirer of Goethe; nay, as might almost seem, by a grateful learner, whom he had taught, whom he had helped to lead out of spiritual obstruction, into peace and light. Making due allowance for all this, there is little in the paper that we object to.

"In Goethe's mind," observes he, "the first aspect that strikes us is its calmness, then its beauty; a deeper inspection reveals to us its vastness and unmeasured strength. This man rules, and is not ruled. The stern and fiery energies of a most passionate soul lie silent in the centre of his being; a trembling sensibility has been inured to stand, without flinching or murmur, the sharpest trials. Nothing outward, nothing inward, shall agitate or control him. The brightest and most capricious fancy, the most piercing and inquisitive intellect, the wildest and deepest imagination; the highest thrills of joy, the bitterest pangs of sorrow: all these are his, he is not theirs. While he moves every heart from its steadfastness,

his own is firm and still: the words that search into the inmost recesses of our nature he pronounces with a tone of coldness and equanimity; in the deepest pathos he weeps not, or his tears are like water trickling from a rock of adamant. He is king of himself and of his world; nor does he rule it like a vulgar great man, like a Napoleon or Charles the Twelfth, by the mere brute exertion of his will, grounded on no principle, or on a false one: his faculties and feelings are not fettered or prostrated under the iron sway of Passion, but led and guided in kindly union under the mild sway of Reason; as the fierce primeval elements of Chaos were stilled at the coming of Light, and bound together, under its soft vesture, into a glorious and beneficent Creation.

"This is the true Rest of man; the dim aim of every human soul, the full attainment of only a chosen few. It comes not unsought to any; but the wise are wise because they think no price too high for it. Goethe's inward home has been reared by slow and laborious efforts; but it stands on no hollow or deceitful basis: for his peace is not from blindness, but from clear vision; not from uncertain hope of alteration, but from sure insight into what cannot alter. His world seems once to have been desolate and baleful as that of the darkest sceptic: but he has covered it anew with beauty and solemnity, derived from deeper sources, over which Doubt can have no sway. He has inquired fearlessly, and fearlessly searched out and denied the False; but he has not forgotten, what is equally essential and infinitely harder, to search out and admit the True. His heart is still full of warmth, though his head is clear and cold; the world for him is still full of grandeur, though he clothes it with no

false colours; his fellow creatures are still objects of reverence and love, though their basenesses are plainer to no eye than to his. To reconcile these contradictions is the task of all good men, each for himself in his own way and manner; a task which, in our age, is encompassed with difficulties peculiar to the time; and which Goethe seems to have accomplished with a success that few can rival. A mind so in unity with itself, even though it were a poor and small one, would arrest our attention, and win some kind regard from us; but when this mind ranks among the strongest and most complicated of the species, it becomes a sight full of interest, a study full of deep instruction.

"Such a mind as Goethe's is the fruit not only of a royal endowment by nature, but also of a culture proportionate to her bounty. In Goethe's original form of spirit we discern the highest gifts of manhood, without any deficiency of the lower; he has an eye and a heart equally for the sublime, the common, and the ridiculous; the elements at once of a poet, a thinker, and a wit. Of his culture we have often spoken already; and it deserves again to be held up to praise and imitation. This, as he himself unostentatiously confesses, has been the soul of all his conduct, the great enterprise of his life; and few that understand him will be apt to deny that he has prospered. As a writer, his resources have been accumulated from nearly all the provinces of human intellect and activity; and he has trained himself to use these complicated instruments with a light expertness which we might have admired in the professor of a solitary department. Freedom and grace and smiling earnestness are the characteristics of his works: the matter of them flows

along in chaste abundance, in the softest combination; and their style is referred to by native critics as the highest specimen of the German tongue.

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"But Goethe's culture as a writer is perhaps less remarkable than his culture as a man. He has learned not in head only, but also in heart; not from Art and Literature, but also by action and passion, in the rugged school of Experience. If asked what was the grand characteristic of his writings, we should not say knowledge, but wisdom. A mind that has seen, and suffered, and done, speaks to us of what it has tried and conquered. A gay delineation will give us notice of dark and toilsome experiences, of business done in the great deep of the spirit; a maxim, trivial to the careless eye, will rise with light and solution over long perplexed periods of our own history. It is thus that heart speaks to heart, that the life of one man becomes a possession to all. Here is a mind of the most subtle and tumultuous elements; but it is governed in peaceful diligence, and its impetuous and ethereal faculties work softly together for good and noble ends. Goethe may be called a Philosopher, for he loves and has practised as a man the wisdom which as a poet he inculcates. Composure and cheerful seriousness seem to breathe over all his character. There is no whining over human woes: it is understood that we must simply all strive to alleviate or remove them. There is no noisy battling for opinions; but a persevering effort to make Truth lovely, and recommend her, by a thousand avenues, to the hearts of all men. Of his personal manners we can easily believe the universal report, as often given in the way of censure as of praise, that he is

a man of consummate breeding and the stateliest presence: for an air of polished tolerance, of courtly, we might almost say majestic, repose and serene humanity is visible throughout his works. In no line of them does he speak with asperity of any man; scarcely ever even of a thing. He knows the good, and loves it; he knows the bad and hateful, and rejects it; but in neither case with violence: his love is calm and active; his rejection is implied rather than pronounced — meek and gentle — though we see that it is thorough, and never to be revoked. The noblest and the basest he not only seems to comprehend, but to personate and body forth in their most secret lineaments: hence actions and opinions appear to him as they are, with all the circumstances which extenuate or endear them to the hearts where they originated and are entertained. This also is the spirit of our Shakspeare, and perhaps of every great dramatic poet. Shakspeare is no sectarian: to all he deals with equity and mercy, because he knows all, and his heart is wide enough for all. In his mind the world is a whole; he figures it as Providence governs it; and to him it is not strange that the sun should be caused to shine on the evil and the good, and the rain to fall on the just and the unjust."

Considered as a transient far-off view of Goethe in his personal character, all this, from the writer's peculiar point of vision, may have its true grounds, and wears, at least, the aspect of sincerity. We may also quote something of what follows on Goethe's character as a poet and thinker, and the contrast he exhibits in

this respect with another celebrated and now altogether European author.

"'Goethe,' observes this critic, 'has been called the "German Voltaire;" but it is a name which does him wrong, and describes him ill. Except in the corresponding variety of their pursuits and knowledge, in which, perhaps, it does Voltaire wrong, the two cannot be compared. Goethe is all, or the best of all, that Voltaire was, and he is much that Voltaire did not dream of. To say nothing of his dignified and truthful character as a man, he belongs, as a thinker and a writer, to a far higher class than this *enfant gâté du monde qu'il gâta*. He is not a questioner and a despiser, but a teacher and a reverencer; not a destroyer, but a builder-up; not a wit only, but a wise man. Of him Montesquieu could not have said, with even epigrammatic truth: *Il a plus que personne l'esprit que tout le monde a*. Voltaire is the *cleverest* of all past and present men; but a great man is something more, and this he surely was not.'"

Whether this epigram, which we have seen in some Biographical Dictionary, really belongs to Montesquieu we know not; but it does seem to us not wholly inapplicable to Voltaire, and, at all events, highly expressive of an important distinction among men of talent generally. In fact, the popular man, and the man of true, at least of great, originality, are seldom one and the same; we suspect that, till after a long struggle on the part of the latter, they are never so. Reasons are obvious enough. The popular man stands on our own

level, or a hair's-breadth higher; he shows us a truth which we can see without shifting our present intellectual position. This is a highly convenient arrangement. The original man, again, stands above us; he wishes to wrench us from our old fixtures, and elevate us to a higher and clearer level: but to quit our old fixtures, especially if we have sat in them with moderate comfort for some score or two of years, is no such easy business; accordingly, we demur, we resist, we even give battle; we still suspect that he is above us, but try to persuade ourselves (Laziness and Vanity earnestly assenting) that he is below. For is it not the very essence of such a man that he be *new?* And who will warrant us that at the same time he shall only be an intensation and continuation of the *old*, which in general is what we long and look for? No one can warrant us. And, granting him to be a man of real genius, real depth, and that speaks not till after earnest meditation, what sort of a philosophy were his, could *we* estimate the length, breadth, and thickness of it at a single glance? And when did Criticism give two glances? Criticism, therefore, opens on such a man its greater and its lesser batteries on every side: he has no security but to go on disregarding it; and, "in the end," says Goethe, "Criticism itself comes to relish that method." But now let a speaker of the other class come forward, one of those men that "have more than any one, the opinion which all men have!" No sooner

does he speak than all and sundry of us feel as if we had been wishing to speak that very thing, as if we ourselves might have spoken it, and forthwith resounds from the united universe a celebration of that surprising feat. What clearness, brilliancy, justness, penetration! Who can doubt that this man is right, when so many thousand votes are ready to back him? Doubtless he is right; doubtless he is a clever man, and his praise will long be in all the Magazines.

Clever men are good, but they are not the best. "The instruction they can give us is like baked bread, savoury and satisfying for a single day;" but unhappily "flour cannot be sown, and seed-corn ought not to be ground." We proceed with our Critic in his contrast of Goethe with Voltaire.

"'As poets,' continues he, 'the two live not in the same hemisphere, not in the same world. Of Voltaire's poetry, it were blindness to deny the polished intellectual vigour, the logical symmetry, the flashes that from time to time give it the colour, if not the warmth, of fire: but it is in a far other sense than this that Goethe is a poet; in a sense of which the French literature has never afforded any example. We may venture to say of him, that his province is high and peculiar; higher than any poet but himself, for several generations, has so far succeeded in, perhaps even has steadfastly attempted. In reading Goethe's poetry, it perpetually strikes us that we are reading the poetry of our own day and generation. No demands are made on our credulity; the light, the science,

the scepticism of our age, is not hid from us. He does not deal in antiquated mythologies, or ring changes on traditionary poetic forms; there are no supernal, no infernal influences—for *Faust* is an apparent rather than a real exception;—but there is the barren prose of the nineteenth century, the vulgar life which we are all leading. and it starts into strange beauty in his hands, and we pause in delighted wonder to behold the flowerage of poesy blooming in that parched and rugged soil. This is the end of his Mignons and Harpers, of his *Hermanns* and *Meisters.* Poetry, as he views it, exists not in time or place, but in the spirit of man; and Art with Nature is now to perform for the poet what Nature alone performed of old. The divinities and demons, the witches, spectres, and fairies, are vanished from the world, never again to be recalled: but the Imagination which created these still lives, and will for ever live, in man's soul; and can again pour its wizard light over the Universe, and summon forth enchantments as lovely or impressive, and which its sister faculties will not contradict. To say that Goethe has accomplished all this would be to say that his genius is greater than was ever given to any man: for if it was a high and glorious mind, or rather series of minds, that peopled the first ages with their peculiar forms of poetry, it must be a series of minds much higher and more glorious that shall so people the present. The angels and demons that can lay prostrate our hearts in the nineteenth century must be of another and more cunning fashion than those who subdued us in the ninth. To have attempted, to have begun this enterprise, may be accounted the greatest praise. That Goethe ever meditated it in the form here set forth we have no direct evidence; but,

indeed, such is the end and aim of high poetry at all times and seasons; for the fiction of the poet is not falsehood, but the purest truth, and if he would lead captive our whole being, not rest satisfied with a part of it, he must address us on interests that *are*, not that *were* ours, and in a dialect which finds a response, and not a contradiction, within our bosoms.'"

Here, however, we must terminate our pilferings or open robberies, and bring these straggling lucubrations to a close. In the extracts we have given, in the remarks made on them, and on the subject of them, we are aware that we have held the attitude of admirers and pleaders; neither is it unknown to us that the critic is, in virtue of his office, a judge, and not an advocate; sits there, not to do favour, but to dispense justice, which, in most cases, will involve blame as well as praise. But we are firm believers in the maxim that for all right judgment of any man or thing it is useful, nay, essential, to see his good qualities before pronouncing on his bad. This maxim is so clear to ourselves, that in respect to poetry at least, we almost think we could make it clear to other men. In the first place, at all events, it is a much shallower and more ignoble occupation to detect faults than to discover beauties. The "critic fly," if it do but alight on any plinth or single cornice of a brave stately building, shall be able to declare, with its half-inch vision, that here is a speck, and there an inequality; that, in fact,

this and the other individual stone are nowise as they should be; for all this, the "critic fly" will be sufficient: but to take in the fair relations of the Whole, to see the building as one object, to estimate its purpose, the adjustment of its parts, and their harmonious co-operation towards that purpose, will require the eye and the mind of a Vitruvius or a Palladio. But farther, the faults of a poem, or other piece of art, as we view them at first, will by no means continue unaltered when we view them after due and final investigation. Let us consider what we mean by a fault. By the word fault we designate something that displeases us, that contradicts us. But here the question might arise, Who are *we*? This fault displeases, contradicts *us*; so far is clear; and had *we*, had *I*, and *my* pleasure and confirmation been the chief end of the poet, then, doubtless he has failed in that end, and his fault remains a fault irremediably, and without defence.' But who shall say whether such really was his object, whether such ought to have been his object? And if it was not and ought not to have been, what becomes of the fault? It must hang altogether undecided; we as yet know nothing of it; perhaps it may not be the poet's but our own fault; perhaps it may be no fault whatever. To see rightly into this matter, to determine with any infallibility whether what we call a fault *is* in very deed a fault, we must previously have settled two points, neither of which may be so readily settled. First, we

must have made plain to ourselves what the poet's aim really and truly was, how the task he had to do stood before his own eye, and how far, with such means as it afforded him, he has fulfilled it. Secondly, we must have decided whether and how far this aim, this task of his, accorded—not with *us*, and our individual crotchets, and the crotchets of our little senate where we give or take the law—but with human nature, and the nature of things at large; with the universal principles of poetic beauty, not as they stand written in our text-books, but in the hearts and imaginations of all men. Does the answer in either case come out unfavourable; was there an inconsistency between the means and the end, a discordance between the end and truth, there is a fault: was there not, there is no fault.

Thus it would appear that the detection of faults, provided they be faults of any depth and consequence, leads us of itself into that region where also the higher beauties of the piece, if it have any true beauties, essentially reside. In fact, according to our view, no man can pronounce dogmatically, with even a chance of being right, on the faults of a poem, till he has seen its very last and highest beauty; the last in becoming visible to any one, which few ever look after, which indeed in most pieces it were very vain to look after; the beauty of the poem as a Whole, in the strict sense; the clear view of it as an indivisible Unity; and whether it has grown up naturally from

the general soil of Thought, and stands there like a thousand-years Oak, no leaf, no bough superfluous; or is nothing but a pasteboard Tree, cobbled together out of size and waste-paper and water-colours; altogether unconnected with the soil of Thought, except by mere juxtaposition, or at best united with it by some decayed *stump* and *dead boughs*, which the more cunning Decorationist (as in your Historic Novel) may have selected for the basis and support of his agglutinations. It is true, most readers judge of a poem by pieces, they praise and blame by pieces; it is a common practice, and for most poems and most readers may be perfectly sufficient: yet we would advise no man to follow this practice, who traces in himself even the slightest capability of following a better one; and if possible, we would advise him to practise only on worthy subjects; to read few poems that will not bear being studied as well as read.

That Goethe has his faults cannot be doubtful, for we believe it was ascertained long ago that there is no man free from them. Neither are we ourselves without some glimmering of certain actual limitations and inconsistencies by which he, too, as he really lives and writes and is, may be hemmed-in; which beset him, too, as they do meaner men; which show us that he, too, is a son of Eve. But to exhibit these before our readers, in the present state of matters, we should reckon no easy labour, were it to be adequately, to be

justly done; and done anyhow, no profitable one. Better is it we should first study him; better to "*see* the great man before attempting to *oversee* him." We are not ignorant that certain objections against Goethe already float vaguely in the English mind, and here and there, according to occasion, have even come to utterance: these, as the study of him proceeds, we shall hold ourselves ready, in due season, to discuss; but for the present we must beg the reader to believe, on our word, that we do not reckon them unanswerable —nay, that we reckon them in general the most answerable things in the world; and things which even a little increase of knowledge will not fail to answer without other help.

For furthering such increase of knowledge on this matter, may we beg the reader to accept two small pieces of advice, which we ourselves have found to be of use in studying Goethe. They seem applicable to the study of Foreign Literature generally; indeed, to the study of all Literature that deserves the name.

The first is, nowise to suppose that Poetry is a superficial, cursory business, which may be seen through to the very bottom, so soon as one inclines to cast his eye on it. We reckon it the falsest of all maxims, that a true Poem can be adequately *tasted*; can be judged of "as men judge of a dinner," by some internal *tongue*, that shall decide on the matter at once and irrevocably. Of the poetry which supplies

spouting-clubs; and circulates in circulating libraries, we speak not here. That is quite another species: which has circulated, and will circulate, and ought to circulate, in all times, but for the study of which no man is required to give rules, the rules being already given by the thing itself. We speak of that Poetry which Masters write, which aims not at "furnishing a languid mind with fantastic shows and indolent emotions," but at incorporating the everlasting Reason of man in forms visible to his Sense, and suitable to it: and of this we say, that to know it is no slight task; but rather that, being the essence of all science, it requires the purest of all study for knowing it. "What!" cries the reader, "are we to *study* Poetry? To pore over it as we do over Fluxions?" Reader, it depends upon your object: if you want only *amusement*, choose your book, and you get along, without study, excellently well. "But is not Shakspeare plain, visible to the very bottom, without study?" cries he. Alas, no, gentle Reader; we cannot think so; we do not find that he is visible to the very bottom even to those that profess the study of him. It has been our lot to read some criticisms on Shakspeare, and to hear a great many; but for most part they amounted to no such "visibility." Volumes we have seen that were simply one huge Interjection printed over three hundred pages. Nine-tenths of our critics have told us little more of Shakspeare than what

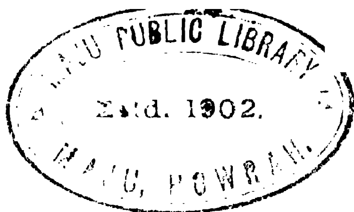
honest Franz Horn says our neighbours used to tell of him, "that he was a great spirit, and stept majestically along." Johnson's Préface, a sound and solid piece for its purpose, is a complete exception to this rule; and, so far as we remember, the only complete one. Students of poetry admire Shakspeare in their tenth year; but go on admiring him more and more, understanding him more and more, till their threescore-and-tenth. Grotius said, he read Terence otherwise than boys do. "Happy contractedness of youth," adds Goethe—"nay, of men in general; that at all moments of their existence they can look upon themselves as complete, and inquire neither after the True nor the False, nor the High nor the Deep, but simply after what is proportioned to themselves."

Our second advice we shall state in few words. It is, to remember that a Foreigner is no Englishman; that in judging a foreign work, it is not enough to ask whether it is suitable to our *modes*, but whether it is suitable to foreign *wants*; above all, whether it is suitable to *itself*. The fairness, the necessity of this can need no demonstration; yet how often do we find it, in practice, altogether neglected! We could fancy we saw some Bond Street Tailor criticising the costume of an ancient Greek; censuring the highly improper cut of collar and lapel; lamenting, indeed, that collar and lapel were nowhere to be seen. He pronounces the costume, easily and decisively, to be

a barbarous one: to know whether it *is* a barbarous one, and how barbarous, the judgment of a Winkelmann might be required, and he would find it hard to give a judgment. For the questions set before the two were radically different. The Fraction asked himself: How will this look in Almack's, and before Lord Mahogany? The Winkelmann asked himself: How will this look in the Universe, and before the Creator of Man?

Whether these remarks of ours may do anything to forward a right appreciation of Goethe in this country we know not, neither do we reckon this last result to be of any vital importance. Yet must we believe that, in recommending Goethe, we are doing our part to recommend a truer study of Poetry itself; and happy were we to fancy that any efforts of ours could promote such an object. Promoted, attained it will be, as we believe, by one means and another. A deeper feeling for Art is abroad over Europe; a purer, more earnest purpose in the study, in the practice of it. In this influence we, too, must participate: the time will come when our own ancient noble Literature will be studied and felt, as well as talked of; when Dilettantism will give place to Criticism in respect of it; and vague wonder end in clear knowledge, in sincere reverence, and, what were best of all, in hearty emulation.

GOETHE'S HELENA.



GOETHE'S HELENA.

[1828.]

NOVALIS has rather tauntingly asserted of Goethe, that the grand law of his being is to conclude whatsoever he undertakes; that, let him engage in any task, no matter what its difficulties or how small its worth, he cannot quit it till he has mastered its whole secret, finished it, and made the result of it his own. This, surely, whatever Novalis might think, is a quality of which it is far safer to have too much than too little: and if, in a friendlier spirit, we admit that it does strikingly belong to Goethe, these his present occupations will not seem out of harmony with the rest of his life; but rather it may be regarded as a singular constancy of fortune, which now allows him, after completing so many single enterprises, to adjust deliberately the details and combination of the whole; and thus, in perfecting his individual works, to put the last hand to the highest of all his works, his own literary character, and leave the impress of it to posterity in that form and accompaniment which he himself

reckons fittest. For the last two years, as many of our readers may know, the venerable Poet has been employed in a patient and thorough revisal of all his Writings; an edition of which, designated as the "complete and final" one, was commenced in 1827, under external encouragements of the most flattering sort, and with arrangements for private co-operation, which, as we learn, have secured the constant progress of the work "against every accident." The first *Lieferung*, of five volumes, is now in our hands, a second of like extent we understand to be already on its way hither; and thus by regular "Deliveries," from half-year to half-year, the whole Forty Volumes are to be completed in 1831.

To the lover of German literature, or of literature in general, this undertaking will not be indifferent: considering, as he must do, the works of Goethe to be among the most important which Germany for some centuries has sent forth, he will value their correctness and completeness for its own sake; and not the less, as forming the conclusion of a long process to which the last step was still wanting; whereby he may not only enjoy the result, but instruct himself by following so great a master through the changes which led to it. We can now add, that, to the mere book-collector also, the business promises to be satisfactory. This Edition, avoiding any attempt at splendour or unnecessary decoration, ranks, nevertheless, in regard to accuracy,

convenience, and true simple elegance, among the best specimens of German typography. The cost too seems moderate; so that, on every account, we doubt not but these tasteful volumes will spread far and wide in their own country, and by-and-by, we may hope, be met with here in many a British library.

Hitherto, in this First Portion, we have found little or no alteration of what was already known; but, in return, some changes of arrangement; and, what is more important, some additions of heretofore unpublished poems; in particular, a piece entitled *Helena, a Classico-romantic Phantasmagoria,* which occupies some eighty pages of Volume Fourth. It is to this piece that we now propose directing the attention of our readers. Such of these as have studied *Helena* for themselves must have felt how little calculated it is, either intrinsically or by its extrinsic relations and allusions, to be rendered very interesting or even very intelligible to the English public, and may incline to augur ill of our enterprise. Indeed, to our own eyes it already looks dubious enough. But the dainty little "Phantasmagoria," it would appear, has become a subject of diligent and truly wonderful speculation to our German neighbours: of which also some vague rumours seem now to have reached this country; and these likely enough to awaken on all hands a curiosity, which, whether intelligent or idle, it were a kind of good deed to allay. In a Journal of this sort, what

little light on such a matter is at our disposal may naturally be looked for.

Helena, like many of Goethe's works, by no means carries its significance written on its forehead, so that he who runs may read; but, on the contrary, it is enveloped in a certain mystery, under coy disguises, which, to hasty readers, may be not only offensively obscure, but altogether provoking and impenetrable. Neither is this any new thing with Goethe. Often has he produced compositions, both in prose and verse, which bring critic and commentator into straits, or even to a total nonplus. Some we have wholly parabolic; some half-literal, half-parabolic; these latter are occasionally studied, by dull heads, in the literal sense alone: and not only studied, but condemned: for, in truth, the outward meaning seems unsatisfactory enough, were it not that ever and anon we are reminded of a cunning, manifold meaning which lies hidden under it; and incited by capricious beckonings to evolve this, more and more completely, from its quaint concealment.

Did we believe that Goethe adopted this mode of writing as a vulgar lure, to confer on his poems the interest which might belong to so many charades, we should hold it a very poor proceeding. Of this most readers of Goethe will know that he is incapable. Such juggleries, and uncertain anglings for distinction, are a class of accomplishments to which he has never made

any pretension. The truth is, this style has, in many cases, its own appropriateness. Certainly, in all matters of Business and Science, in all expositions of fact or argument, clearness and ready comprehensibility are a great, often an indispensable object. Nor is there any man better aware of this principle than Goethe, or who more rigorously adheres to it, or more happily exemplifies it, wherever it seems applicable. But in this, as in many other respects, Science and Poetry, having separate purposes, may have each its several law. If an artist has conceived his subject in the secret shrine of his own mind, and knows, with a knowledge beyond all power of cavil, that it is true and pure, he may choose his own manner of exhibiting it, and will generally be the fittest to choose it well. One degree of light, he may find, will beseem one delineation; quite a different degree of light another. The face of Agamemnon was not painted, but hidden in the old picture: the Veiled Figure at Sais was the most expressive in the Temple. In fact, the grand point is to *have* a meaning, a genuine, deep, and noble one; the proper form for embodying this, the form best suited to the subject and to the author, will gather round it almost of its own accord. We profess ourselves unfriendly to no mode of communicating Truth; which we rejoice to meet with in all shapes, from that of the child's Catechism to the deepest poetical Allegory. Nay, the Allegory itself may sometimes

be the truest part of the matter. John Bunyan, we hope, is nowise our best theologian; neither, unhappily, is theology our most attractive science; yet which of our compends and treatises, nay, which of our romances and poems, lives in such mild sunshine as the good old *Pilgrim's Progress* in the memory of so many men?

Under Goethe's management, this style of composition has often a singular charm. The reader is kept on the alert, ever conscious of his own active co-operation: light breaks on him, and clearer and clearer vision, by degrees; till at last the whole lovely Shape comes forth, definite, it may be, and bright with heavenly radiance, or fading, on this side and that, into vague, expressive mystery; but true in both cases, and beautiful with nameless enchantments, as the poet's own eye may have beheld it. We love it the more for the labour it has given us; we almost feel as if we ourselves had assisted in its creation. And herein lies the highest merit of a piece, and the proper art of reading it. We have not *read* an author till we have seen his object, whatever it may be, as *he* saw it. Is it a matter of reasoning, and has he reasoned stupidly and falsely? We should understand the circumstances which, to his mind, made it seem true, or persuaded him to write it, knowing that it was not so. In any other way we do him injustice if we judge him. Is it of poetry? His words are so many symbols, to which we ourselves must furnish the interpretation; or they

remain, as in all prosaic minds the words of poetry ever do, a dead letter; indications they are, barren in themselves, but, by following which, we also may reach, or approach, that Hill of Vision where the poet stood, beholding the glorious scene which it is the purport of his poem to show others.

A reposing state, in which the Hill were brought under us, not we obliged to mount it, might indeed for the present be more convenient; but, in the end, it could not be equally satisfying. Continuance of passive pleasure, it should never be forgotten, is here, as under all conditions of mortal existence, an impossibility. Everywhere in life, the true question is, not what we *gain*, but what we *do*; so also in intellectual matters, in conversation, in reading, which is more precise and careful conversation, it is not what we *receive*, but what we are made to *give*, that chiefly contents and profits us. True, the mass of readers will object; because, like the mass of men, they are too indolent. But if any one affect, not the active and watchful, but the passive and somnolent line of study, are there not writers expressly fashioned for him, enough and to spare? It is but the smaller number of books that become more instructive by a second perusal; the great majority are as perfectly plain as perfect triteness can make them. Yet, if time is precious, no book that will not improve by repeated readings deserves to be read at all. And were there

an artist of a right spirit; a man of wisdom, conscious of his high vocation, of whom we could know beforehand that he had not written without purpose and earnest meditation, that he knew what he had written, and had embodied in it, more or less, the creations of a deep and noble soul—should we not draw near to him reverently, as disciples to a master; and what task could there be more profitable than to read him as we have described, to study him even to his minutest meanings? For, were not this to think as he had thought, to see with his gifted eyes, to make the very mood and feeling of his great and rich mind the mood also of our poor and little one? It is under the consciousness of some such mutual relation that Goethe writes, and that his countrymen now reckon themselves bound to read him; a relation singular, we might say solitary, in the present time; but which it is ever necessary to bear in mind in estimating his literary procedure.

To justify it in this particular, much more might be said, were it our chief business at present. But what mainly concerns us here is to know that such, justified or not, is the Poet's manner of writing: which also must prescribe for us a correspondent manner of studying him, if we study him at all. For the rest, on this latter point he nowhere expresses any undue anxiety. His works have invariably been sent forth without preface, without note or comment of any kind; but left, sometimes plain and direct, sometimes dim

and typical, in what degree of clearness or obscurity he himself may have judged best, to be scanned, and glossed, and censured, and distorted, as might please the innumerable multitude of critics; to whose verdicts he has been, for a great part of his life, accused of listening with unwarrantable composure. *Helena* is no exception to that practice, but rather among the strong instances of it. This *Interlude to Faust* presents itself abruptly, under a character not a little enigmatic: so that, at first view, we know not well what to make of it; and only after repeated perusals, will the scattered glimmerings of significance begin to coalesce into continuous light, and the whole, in any measure, rise before us with that greater or less degree of coherence which it may have had in the mind of the Poet. Nay, after all, no perfect clearness may be attained, but only various approximations to it; hints and half-glances of a meaning, which is still shrouded in vagueness: nay, to the just picturing of which this very vagueness was essential. For the whole piece has a dreamlike character; and, in these cases, no prudent soothsayer will be altogether confident. To our readers we must now endeavour, so far as possible, to show both the dream and its interpretation: the former as it stands written before us; the latter from our own private conjecture alone; for of those strange German comments we yet know nothing except by the faintest hearsay.

Helena forms part of a continuation to *Faust*: but, happily for our present undertaking, its connection with the latter work is much looser than might have been expected. We say happily; because *Faust*, though considerably talked of in England, appears still to be nowise known. We have made it our duty to inspect the English Translation of *Faust*, as well as the Extracts which accompany Retzsch's *Outlines*; and various disquisitions and animadversions, vituperative, or laudatory, grounded on these two works; but unfortunately have found there no cause to alter the above persuasion. *Faust* is emphatically a work of Art; a work matured in the mysterious depths of a vast and wonderful mind; and bodied forth with that truth and curious felicity of composition in which this man is generally admitted to have no living rival. To reconstruct such a work in another language; to show it in its hard yet graceful strength; with those slight witching traits of pathos or of sarcasm, those glimpses of solemnity or terror, and so many reflexes and evanescent echoes of meaning, which connect it in strange union with the whole Infinite of thought—were business for a man of different powers than has yet attempted German translation among us. In fact, *Faust* is to be read not once but many times, if we would understand it: every line, every word has its purport; and only in such minute inspection will the essential significance of the poem display itself.

Perhaps it is even chiefly by following these fainter traces and tokens that the true point of vision for the whole is discovered to us; that we get to stand at last in the proper scene of Faust; a wild and wondrous region, where in pale light the primeval Shapes of Chaos—as it were, the Foundations of Being itself—seem to loom forth, dim and huge, in the vague Immensity around us; and the life and nature of man, with its brief interests, its misery and sin, its mad passion and poor frivolity, struts and frets its hour, encompassed and overlooked by that stupendous All, of which it forms an indissoluble though so mean a fraction. He who would study all this must for a long time, we are afraid, be content to study it in the original.

But our English criticisms of *Faust* have been of a still more unedifying sort. Let any man fancy the *Œdipus Tyrannus* discovered for the first time; translated from an unknown Greek manuscript, by some ready-writing manufacturer; and "brought out" at Drury Lane, with new music, made as "apothecaries make new mixtures, by pouring out of one vessel into another!" Then read the theatrical report in the Morning Papers, and the Magazines of next month. Was not the whole affair rather "heavy?" How indifferent did the audience sit; how little use was made of the handkerchief, except by such as took snuff! Did not Œdipus somewhat remind us of a blubbering

schoolboy, and Jocasta of a decayed milliner? Confess that the plot was monstrous, nay, considering the marriage-law of England, highly immoral. On the whole, what a singular deficiency of *taste* must this Sophocles have laboured under! But probably he was excluded from the "society of the influential classes;" for, after all, the man is not without indications of genius: had *we* had the training of him—And so on, through all the variations of the critical corn-pipe.

So might it have fared with the ancient Grecian; for so has it fared with the only modern that writes in a Grecian spirit. This treatment of *Faust* may deserve to be mentioned, for various reasons; not to be lamented over, because, as in much more important instances, it is inevitable, and lies in the nature of the case. Besides, a better state of things is evidently enough coming round. By-and-by, the labours, poetical and intellectual, of the Germans, as of other nations, will appear before us in their true shape; and *Faust*, among the rest, will have justice done it. For ourselves, it were unwise presumption, at any time, to pretend opening the full poetical significance of *Faust*; nor is this the place for making such an attempt. Present purposes will be answered if we can point out some general features and bearings of the piece; such as to exhibit its relations with *Helena*: by what contrivances this latter has been intercalated into it and

how far the strange picture and the strange framing it is enclosed in correspond.

The story of Faust forms one of the most remarkable productions of the Middle Ages; or rather, it is the most striking embodiment of a highly remarkable belief which originated or prevailed in those ages. Considered strictly, it may take the rank of a Christian mythus, in the same sense as the story of Prometheus, of Titan, and the like, are Pagan ones; and, to our keener inspection, it will disclose a no less impressive or characteristic aspect of the same human nature—here bright, joyful, self-confident, smiling even in its sternness; there deep, meditative, awe-struck, austere —in which both they and it took their rise. To us, in these days, it is not easy to estimate how this story of Faust, invested with its magic and infernal horrors, must have harrowed up the souls of a rude and earnest people, in an age when its dialect was not yet obsolete, and such contracts with the principle of Evil were thought not only credible in general, but possible to every individual auditor who here shuddered at the mention of them. The day of Magic is gone by; Witchcraft has been put a stop to by Act of Parliament. But the mysterious relations which it emblemed still continue; the Soul of Man still fights with the dark influences of Ignorance, Misery, and Sin; still lacerates itself, like a captive bird, against the iron limits which Necessity has drawn round it;

still follows False Shows, seeking peace and good on paths where no peace or good is to be found. In this sense, *Faust* may still be considered as true; nay, as a truth of the most impressive sort, and one which will always remain true.

To body forth in modern symbols a feeling so old and deep-rooted in our whole European way of thought, were a task not unworthy of the highest poetical genius. In Germany, accordingly, it has several times been attempted, and with very various success. Klinger has produced a Romance of *Faust*, full of rugged sense, and here and there not without considerable strength of delineation; yet, on the whole, of an essentially unpoetical character; dead, or living with only a mechanical life; coarse, almost gross, and to our minds far too redolent of pitch and bitumen. Maler Müller's *Faust*, which is a Drama, must be regarded as a much more genial performance, so far as it goes: the secondary characters, the Jews and rakish Students, often remind us of our own Fords and Marlowes. His main persons, however, Faust and the Devil, are but inadequately conceived; Faust is little more than self-willed, supercilious, and, alas, insolvent; the Devils, above all, are savage, long-winded, and insufferably noisy. Besides, the piece has been left in a fragmentary state; it can nowise pass as the best work of Müller's. Klingemann's *Faust*, which also is (or lately *was*) a Drama,

we have never seen; and have only heard of it as of a tawdry and hollow article, suited for immediate use, and immediate oblivion.

Goethe, we believe, was the first who tried this subject; and is, on all hands, considered as by far the most successful. His manner of treating it appears to us, so far as we can understand it, peculiarly just and happy. He retains the supernatural vesture of the story, but retains it with the consciousness, on his and our part, that it is a chimera. His art-magic comes forth in doubtful twilight; vague in its outline; interwoven everywhere with light sarcasm; nowise as a real Object, but as a real Shadow of an Object, which is also real, yet lies beyond our horizon, and, except in its shadows, cannot itself be seen. Nothing were simpler than to look in this new poem for a new "Satan's Invisible World Displayed," or any effort to excite the sceptical minds of these days by goblins, wizards, and other infernal ware. Such enterprises belong to artists of a different species: Goethe's Devil is a cultivated personage, and acquainted with the modern sciences; sneers at witchcraft and the black-art, even while employing them, as heartily as any member of the French Institute; for he is a *philosophe*, and doubts most things, nay, half disbelieves even his own existence. It is not without a cunning effort that all this is managed; but managed, in a considerable degree, it is; for a world of

magic is opened to us which, we might almost say, we feel at once to be true and not true.

In fact, Mephistopheles comes before us, not arrayed in the terrors of Cocytus and Phlegethon, but in the natural indelible deformity of Wickedness; he is the Devil, not of Superstition, but of Knowledge. Here is no cloven foot, or horns and tail: he himself informs us that, during the late march of intellect, the very Devil has participated in the spirit of the Age, and laid these appendages aside. Doubtless, Mephistopheles "has the manners of a gentleman;" he "knows the world:" nothing can exceed the easy tact with which he manages himself; his wit and sarcasm are unlimited; the cool, heartfelt contempt with which he despises all things, human and divine, might make the fortune of half a dozen "fellows about town." Yet withal he is a devil in very deed; a genuine Son of Night. He calls himself the Denier; and this truly is his name; for, as Voltaire did with historical doubts, so does he with all moral appearances: settles them with a *N'en croyez rien.* The shrewd, all-informed intellect he has, is an attorney intellect; it can contradict, but it cannot affirm. With lynx vision, he descries at a glance the ridiculous, the unsuitable, the bad; but for the solemn, the noble, the worthy, he is blind as his ancient Mother. Thus does he go along, qualifying, confuting, despising; on all hands detecting the false, but without force to bring forth,

or even to discern, any glimpse of the true. Poor Devil! what truth should there be for him? To see Falsehood is his only Truth: falsehood and evil are the rule, truth and good the exception which confirms it. He can believe in nothing, but in his own self-conceit, and in the indestructible baseness, folly, and hypocrisy of men. For him, virtue is some bubble of the blood: "it stands written on his face that he never loved a living soul." Nay, he cannot even hate: at Faust himself he has no grudge; he merely tempts him by way of experiment, and to pass the time scientifically. Such a combination of perfect Understanding with perfect Selfishness, of logical life with moral Death; so universal a denier, both in heart and head—is undoubtedly a child of Darkness, an emissary of the primeval Nothing: and coming forward, as he does, like a person of breeding, and without any flavour of brimstone, may stand here, in his merely spiritual deformity, at once potent, dangerous, and contemptible, as the best and only genuine Devil of these latter times.

In strong contrast with this impersonation of modern worldly-mindedness stands Faust himself, by nature the antagonist of it, but destined also to be its victim. If Mephistopheles represent the spirit of Denial, Faust may represent that of Inquiry and Endeavour: the two are, by necessity, in conflict; the light and the darkness of man's life and mind.

Intrinsically, Faust is a noble being, though no wise one. His desires are towards the high and true; nay, with a whirlwind impetuosity he rushes forth over the Universe to grasp all excellence; his heart yearns towards the infinite and the invisible: only that he knows not the conditions under which alone this is to be attained. Confiding in his feeling of himself, he has started with the tacit persuasion, so natural to all men, that *he* at least, however it may fare with others, shall and must be *happy*; a deep-seated, though only half-conscious conviction lurks in him, that wherever he is not successful, fortune has dealt with him *unjustly*. His purposes are fair, nay, generous: why should he not prosper in them? For in all his lofty aspirings, his strivings after truth and more than human greatness of mind, it has never struck him to inquire how he, the striver, was warranted for such enterprises: with what faculty Nature had equipped him; within what limits she had hemmed him in; by what right *he* pretended to be happy, or could, some short space ago, have pretended to *be* at all. Experience, indeed, will teach him, for "Experience is the best of schoolmasters; only the school-fees are heavy." As yet, too, disappointment, which fronts him on every hand, rather maddens than instructs. Faust has spent his youth and manhood, not as others do, in the sunny crowded paths of profit, or among the rosy bowers of pleasure, but darkly and

alone in the search of Truth; is it fit that Truth should now hide herself, and his sleepless pilgrimage towards Knowledge and Vision end in the pale shadow of Doubt? To his dream of a glorious higher happiness, all earthly happiness has been sacrificed; friendship, love, the social rewards of ambition were cheerfully cast aside, for his eye and his heart were bent on a region of clear and supreme good; and now, in its stead, he finds isolation, silence, and despair. What solace remains? Virtue once promised to be her own reward; but because she does not pay him in the current coin of worldly enjoyment, he reckons her too a delusion; and, like Brutus, reproaches as a shadow what he once worshipped as a substance. Whither shall he now tend? For his loadstars have gone out one by one; and as the darkness fell, the strong steady wind has changed into a fierce and aimless tornado. Faust calls himself a monster, "without object, yet without rest." The vehement, keen, and stormful nature of the man is stung into fury, as he thinks of all he has endured and lost; he broods in gloomy meditation, and, like Bellerophon, wanders apart, "eating his own heart;" or, bursting into fiery paroxysms, curses man's whole existence as a mockery; curses hope and faith, and joy and care, and what is worst, "curses patience more than all the rest." Had his weak arm the power, he could smite the Universe asunder, as at the crack of Doom, and hurl his own

vexed being along with it into the silence of Annihilation.

Thus Faust is a man who has quitted the ways of vulgar men, without light to guide him on a better way. No longer restricted, by the sympathies, the common interests, and common persuasions by which the mass of mortals—each individually ignorant, nay, it may be, stolid and altogether blind as to the proper aim of life—are yet held together, and, like stones in the channel of a torrent, by their multitude and mutual collision, are made to move with some regularity—he is still but a slave: the slave of impulses, which are stronger, not truer or better, and the more unsafe that they are solitary. He sees the vulgar of mankind happy, but happy only in their baseness. Himself he feels to be peculiar; the victim of a strange, an unexampled destiny; not as other men, he is "*with* them, not *of* them." There is misery here, nay, as Goethe has elsewhere wisely remarked, the beginning of madness itself. It is only in the sentiment of companionship that men feel safe and assured: to all doubts and mysterious "questionings of destiny," their sole satisfying answer is, *Others do and suffer the like.* Were it not for this, the dullest day-drudge of Mammon might think himself into unspeakable abysses of despair; for he too is "fearfully and wonderfully made;" Infinitude and Incomprehensibility surround him on this hand and that; and the vague spectre

Death, silent and sure as Time, is advancing at all moments to sweep him away for ever. But he answers, *Others do and suffer the like;* and plods along without misgivings. Were there but One Man in the world, he would be a terror to himself, and the highest man not less so than the lowest. Now, it is as this One Man that Faust regards himself: he is divided from his fellows, cannot answer with them, *Others do the like;* and yet, why or how he specially is to *do* or *suffer* will nowhere reveal itself. For he is still "in the gall of bitterness." Pride, and an entire uncompromising though secret love of Self, are still the mainsprings of his conduct. Knowledge with him is precious only because it is power; even virtue he would love chiefly as a finer sort of sensuality, and because it was *his* virtue. A ravenous hunger for enjoyment haunts him everywhere; the stinted allotments of earthly life are as a mockery to him: to the iron law of force he will not yield, for his heart, though torn, is yet unweakened, and till Humility shall open his eyes the soft law of Wisdom will be hidden from him.

To invest a man of this character with supernatural powers is but enabling him to repeat his error on a larger scale—to play the same false game with a deeper and more ruinous stake. Go where he may, he will "find himself again in a conditional world;" widen his sphere as he pleases, he will find it again encircled by the empire of Necessity; the gay island of Existence

is again but a fraction of the ancient realm of Night. Were he all-wise and all-powerful, perhaps he might be contented and virtuous; scarcely otherwise. The poorest human soul is infinite in wishes, and the infinite Universe was not made for one, but for all. Vain were it for Faust, by heaping height on height, to struggle towards infinitude; while to that law of Self-denial, by which alone man's narrow destiny may become an infinitude within itself, he is still a stranger. Such, however, is his attempt; not indeed incited by hope, but goaded on by despair, he unites himself with the Fiend, as with a stronger though a wicked agency; reckless of all issues, if so were that, by these means, the craving of his heart might be stayed, and the dark secret of Destiny unravelled or forgotten.

It is this conflicting union of the higher nature of the soul with the lower elements of human life; of Faust, the son of Light and Free-will, with the influences of Doubt, Denial, and Obstruction, or Mephistopheles, who is the symbol and spokesman of these, that the poet has here proposed to delineate. A high problem, and of which the solution is yet far from completed; nay, perhaps, in a poetical sense, is not, strictly speaking, capable of completion. For it is to be remarked that, in this contract with the Prince of Darkness, little or no mention or allusion is made to a Future Life; whereby it might seem as if the action was not intended, in the manner of the old Legend, to terminate

in Faust's perdition, but rather as if an altogether different end must be provided for him. Faust, indeed, wild and wilful as he is, cannot be regarded as a wicked, much less as an utterly reprobate, man; we do not reckon him ill-intentioned, but misguided and miserable; he falls into crime, not by purpose, but by accident and blindness. To send him to the Pit of Woe; to render such a character the eternal slave of Mephistopheles, would look like making darkness triumphant over light, blind force over erring reason; or, at best, were cutting the Gordian knot, not loosing it. If we mistake not, Goethe's *Faust* will have a finer moral than the old nursery-tale, or the other plays and tales that have been founded on it. Our seared and blighted yet still noble Faust will not end in the madness of horror, but in Peace grounded on better Knowledge. Whence that Knowledge is to come, what higher and freer world of Art or Religion may be hovering in the mind of the Poet, we will not try to surmise: perhaps in bright aërial emblematic glimpses, he may yet show it us, transient and afar off, yet clear with orient beauty, as a Land of Wonders and new Poetic Heaven.

With regard to that part of the Work already finished, we must here say little more. *Faust*, as it yet stands, is, indeed, only a stating of the difficulty; but a stating of it wisely, truly, and with deepest poetic emphasis. For how many living hearts, even now

imprisoned in the perplexities of Doubt, do these wild, piercing tones of Faust, his withering agonies and fiery desperation, "speak the word they have long been waiting to hear!" A nameless pain had long brooded over the soul; here, by some light touch, it starts into form and voice: we see it and know it, and see that another also knew it. This *Faust* is as a mystic Oracle for the mind—a Dodona grove, where the oaks and fountains prophesy to us of our destiny, and murmur unearthly secrets.

How all this is managed, and the Poem so curiously fashioned; how the clearest insight is combined with the keenest feeling, and the boldest and wildest imagination; by what soft and skilful finishing these so heterogeneous elements are blended in fine harmony, and the dark world of spirits, with its merely metaphysical entities, plays like a chequering of strange mysterious shadows among the palpable objects of material life; and the whole, firm in its details, and sharp and solid as reality, yet hangs before us, melting on all sides into air, and free and light as the baseless fabric of a vision; all this the reader can learn fully nowhere but by long study in the Work itself. The general scope and spirit of it we have now endeavoured to sketch; the few incidents on which, with the aid of much dialogue and exposition, these have been brought out, are perhaps already known to most readers, and, at all events, need not be minutely recapitulated here.

Mephistopheles has promised to himself that he will lead Faust "through the bustling inanity of life," but that its pleasures shall tempt and not satisfy him; "food shall hover before his eager lips, but he shall beg for nourishment in vain." Hitherto they have travelled but a short way together; yet, so far, the Denier has kept his engagement well. Faust, endowed with all earthly and many more than earthly advantages, is still no nearer contentment; nay, after a brief season of marred and uncertain joy, he finds himself sunk into deeper wretchedness than ever. Margaret, an innocent girl whom he loves, but has betrayed, is doomed to die, and already crazed in brain, less for her own errors than for his: in a scene of true pathos he would fain persuade her to escape with him, by the aid of Mephistopheles, from prison; but in the instinct of her heart she finds an invincible aversion to the Fiend: she chooses death and ignominy rather than life and love, if of his giving. At her final refusal, Mephistopheles proclaims that "she is judged," a voice from Above that "she is saved;" the action terminates; Faust and Mephistopheles vanish from our sight, as into boundless Space.

And now, after so long a preface, we arrive at *Helena*, the "Classico-romantic Phantasmagoria," where these Adventurers, strangely altered by travel, and in altogether different costume, have again risen into sight. Our long preface was not needless; for

Faust and *Helena*, though separated by some wide and marvellous interval, are nowise disconnected. The characters may have changed by absence; Faust is no longer the same bitter and tempestuous man, but appears in chivalrous composure, with a silent energy, a grave and, as it were, commanding ardour. Mephistopheles alone may retain somewhat of his old spiteful shrewdness; but still the past state of these personages must illustrate the present; and only by what we remember of them can we try to interpret what we see. In fact, the style of *Helena* is altogether new—quiet, simple, joyful; passing by a short gradation from Classic dignity into Romantic pomp; it has everywhere a full and sunny tone of colouring; resembles not a tragedy, but a gay, gorgeous masque. Neither is Faust's former history alluded to, or any explanation given us of occurrences that may have intervened. It is a light scene, divided by chasms and unknown distance from that other country of gloom. Nevertheless, the latter still frowns in the background; nay, rises aloft, shutting out farther view, and our gay vision attains a new significance as it is painted on that canvas of storm.

We question whether it ever occurred to any English reader of *Faust*, that the work needed a continuation, or even admitted one. To the Germans, however, in their deeper study of a favourite poem, which also they have full means of studying, this has long been no

secret; and such as have seen with what zeal most German readers cherish *Faust*, and how the younger of them will recite whole scenes of it with a vehemence resembling that of Gil Blas and his *Figures Hibernoises*, in the streets of Oviedo, may estimate the interest excited in that country by the following Notice from the Author, published last year in his *Kunst und Alterthum.*

"*Helena. Interlude in Faust.*

"Faust's character, in the elevation to which latter refinement, working on the old rude Tradition, has raised it, represents a man who, feeling impatient and imprisoned within the limits of mere earthly existence, regards the possession of the highest knowledge, the enjoyment of the fairest blessings, as insufficient even in the slightest degree to satisfy his longing: a spirit, accordingly, which, struggling out on all sides, ever returns the more unhappy.

"This form of mind is so accordant with our modern disposition, that various persons of ability have been induced to undertake the treatment of such a subject. My manner of attempting it obtained approval: distinguished men considered the matter, and commented on my performance; all which I thankfully observed. At the same time I could not but wonder that none of those who undertook a continuation and completion of my Fragment had lighted on the thought, which seemed so obvious, that the composition of a Second Part must necessarily elevate itself altogether away from the hampered sphere of the First, and conduct a man of such

a nature into higher regions, under worthier circumstances.

"How I, for my part, had determined to essay this, lay silently before my own mind, from time to time exciting me to some progress; while from all and each I carefully guarded my secret, still in hope of bringing the work to the wished-for issue. Now, however, I must no longer keep back; or, in publishing my collective Endeavours, conceal any farther secret from the world; to which, on the contrary, I feel myself bound to submit my whole labours, even though in a fragmentary state.

"Accordingly I have resolved that the above-named Piece, a smaller drama, complete within itself, but pertaining to the Second Part of *Faust*, shall be forthwith presented in the First Portion of my Works.

"The wide chasm between that well-known dolorous conclusion of the First Part, and the entrance of an antique Grecian Heroine, is not yet overarched; meanwhile, as a preamble, my readers will accept what follows:

"The old Legend tells us, and the Puppet-play fails not to introduce the scene, that Faust, in his imperious pride of heart, required from Mephistopheles the love of the fair Helena of Greece; in which demand the other, after some reluctance, gratified him. Not to overlook so important a concern in our work was a duty for us: and how we have endeavoured to discharge it will be seen in this Interlude. But what may have furnished the proximate occasion of such an occurrence, and how, after manifold hindrances, our old magical Craftsman can have found means to bring back the individual Helena, in person, out of Orcus into Life, must, in this stage of the business, remain undiscovered. For the present, it is

enough if our reader will admit that the real Helena may step forth, on antique tragedy-cothurnus, before her primitive abode in Sparta. We then request him to observe in what way and manner Faust will presume to court favour from this royal all-famous Beauty of the world."

To manage so unexampled a courtship will be admitted to be no easy task; for the mad hero's prayer must here be fulfilled to its largest extent before the business can proceed a step; and the gods, it is certain, are not in the habit of annihilating time and space, even to make "two lovers happy." Our Marlowe was not ignorant of this mysterious *liaison* of Faust's: however, he slurs it over briefly, and without fronting the difficulty: Helena merely flits across the scene as an airy pageant, without speech or personality, and makes the lovesick philosopher "immortal by a kiss." Probably there are not many that would grudge Faust such immortality; we at least nowise envy him: for who does not see that this, in all human probability, is no real Helena, but only some hollow phantasm attired in her shape; while the true daughter of Leda still dwells afar off in the inane kingdoms of Dis, and heeds not and hears not the most potent invocations of black art? Another matter it is to call forth the frail fair one in very deed; not in form only, but in soul and life, the *same* Helena whom the Son of Atreus wedded, and for whose sake

Ilion ceased to be. For Faust must behold this Wonder, not as she seemed, but as she was; and at his unearthly desire the Past shall become Present; and the antique Time must be new-created, and give back its persons and circumstances, though so long since reingulfed in the silence of the blank bygone Eternity! However, Mephistopheles is a cunning genius, and will not start at common obstacles. Perhaps, indeed, he is Metaphysician enough to know that Time and Space are but quiddities, not entities; *forms* of the human soul, Laws of Thought, which to us appear independent existences, but, out of our brain, have no existence whatever: in which case the whole nodus may be more of a logical cobweb than any actual material perplexity. Let us see how he unravels it, or cuts it.

The scene is Greece; not our poor oppressed Ottoman Morea, but the old heroic Hellas; for the sun again shines on Sparta, and "Tyndarus' high House" stands here bright, massive, and entire, among its mountains, as when Menelaus revisited it, wearied with his ten years of warfare and eight of sea-roving. Helena appears in front of the Palace, with a Chorus of captive Trojan maidens. These are but Shades, we know, summoned from the deep realms of Hades, and embodied for the nonce: but the conjurer has so managed it, that they themselves have no consciousness of this their true and highly precarious state of

existence: the intermediate three thousand years have been obliterated, or compressed into a point; and these fair figures, on revisiting the upper air, entertain not the slightest suspicion that they had ever left it, or, indeed, that anything special had happened; save only that they had just disembarked from the Spartan ships, and been sent forward by Menelaus to provide for his reception, which is shortly to follow. All these indispensable preliminaries, it would appear, Mephistopheles has arranged with considerable success. Of the poor Shades, and their entire ignorance, he is so sure, that he would not scruple to cross-question them on this very point, so ticklish for his whole enterprise; nay, cannot forbear, now and then, throwing out malicious hints to mystify Helena herself, and raise the strangest doubts as to her personal identity Thus on one occasion, as we shall see, he reminds her of a scandal which had gone abroad of her being a *double* personage, of her living with King Proteus in Egypt at the very time when she lived with Beau Paris in Troy; and, what is more extraordinary still, of her having been dead, and married to Achilles afterwards in the Island of Leuce! Helena admits that it is the most inexplicable thing on earth; can only conjecture that "She a Vision was joined to him a Vision;" and then sinks into a reverie or swoon in the arms of the Chorus. In this way can the nether-world Scapin sport with the perplexed Beauty; and by sly

practice make her show us the secret, which is unknown to herself!

For the present, however, there is no thought of such scruples. Helena and her maidens, far from doubting that they are real authentic denizens of this world, feel themselves in a deep embarrassment about its concerns. From the dialogue, in long Alexandrines, or choral Recitative, we soon gather that matters wear a threatening aspect. Helena salutes her paternal and nuptial mansion in such style as may beseem an erring wife, returned from so eventful an elopement; alludes with charitable lenience to her frailty; which, indeed it would seem, was nothing but the merest accident for she had simply gone to pay her vows, "according to sacred wont," in the temple of Cytherea, when the "Phrygian robber" seized her; and further informs us that the immortals still foreshow to her a dubious future:

For seldom, in our swift ship, did my husband deign
To look on me; and word of comfort spake he none.
As if a-brooding mischief, there he silent sat;
Until, when steered into Eurotas' bending bay,
The first ships with their prows but kissed the land,
He rose, and said, as by the voice of gods inspired:
Here will I that my warriors, troop by troop, disbark;
I muster them, in battle-order, on the ocean strand.
But thou, go forward, up Eurotas' sacred bank,
Guiding the steeds along the flower-besprinkled space,
Till thou arrive on the fair plain where Lacedæmon,

Erewhile a broad, fruit-bearing field, has piled its roofs
Amid the mountains, and sends up the smoke of hearths.
Then enter thou the high-towered Palace; call the Maids
I left at parting, and the wise old Stewardess:
With her inspect the Treasures which thy father left,
And I, in war or peace still adding, have heaped up.
Thou findest all in order standing; for it is
The prince's privilege to see, at his return,
Each household item as it was, and where it was;
For of himself the slave hath power to alter nought.

It appears, moreover, that Menelaus has given her directions to prepare for a solemn Sacrifice: the ewers, the pateras, the altar, the axe, dry wood, are all to be in readiness; only of the victim there was no mention; a circumstance from which Helena fails not to draw some rather alarming surmises. However, reflecting that all issues rest with the higher Powers, and that, in any case, irresolution and procrastination will avail her nothing, she at length determines on this grand enterprise of entering the palace, to make a general review; and enters accordingly. But long before any such business could have been finished, she hastily returns, with a frustrated, nay terrified, aspect; much to the astonishment of her Chorus, who pressingly inquire the cause.

HELENA, *who has left the door-leaves open, agitated.*

Beseems not that Jove's daughter shrink with common fright,
Nor by the brief cold touch of Fear be chilled and stunned.

Yet the Horror, which ascending, in the womb of Night,
From deeps of Chaos, rolls itself together many-shaped,
Like glowing Clouds, from out the mountain's fire-throat,
In threatening ghastliness, may shake even heroes' hearts.
So have the Stygian here to-day appointed me
A welcome to my native Mansion, such that fain
From the oft-trod, long-wished-for threshold, like a guest
That has took leave, I would withdraw my steps for aye.
But no! Retreated have I to the light, nor shall
Ye farther force me, angry Powers, be who ye may.
New expiations will I use; then purified,
The blaze of the Hearth may greet the Mistress as the
Lord.

PANTHALIS *the* CHORAGE.

Discover, noble queen, to us thy handmaidens,
That wait by thee in love, what misery has befallen.

HELENA.

What I have seen, ye too with your own eyes shall see,
If Night have not already suck'd her Phantoms back
To the abysses of her wonder-bearing breast.
Yet, would ye know this thing, I tell it you in words.
When bent on present duty, yet with anxious thought,
I solemnly set foot in these high royal Halls,
The silent, vacant passages astounded me;
For tread of hasty footsteps nowhere met the ear,
Nor bustle as of busy menial-work the eye.
No maid comes forth to me, no Stewardess, such as
Still wont with friendly welcome to salute all guests.
But as, alone advancing, I approach the Hearth,
There, by the ashy remnant of dim, outburnt coals,

Sits, crouching on the ground, up-muffled, some huge
Crone.
Not as in sleep she sat, but as in drowsy muse.
With ordering voice I bid her rise ; nought doubting 'twas
The Stewardess the King, at parting hence, had left.
But, heedless, shrunk together, sits she motionless ;
And as I chid, at last outstretch'd her lean right arm,
As if she beckoned me from hall and hearth away.
I turn indignant from her, and hasten out forthwith
Towards the steps whereon aloft the Thalamos
Adorned rises ; and near by it the Treasure-room ;
When, lo, the Wonder starts abruptly from the floor ;
Imperious, barring my advance, displays herself
In haggard stature, hollow bloodshot eyes ; a shape
Of hideous strangeness, to perplex all sight and thought.
But I discourse to the air ; for words in vain attempt
To body forth to sight the form that dwells in us.
There see herself ! She ventures forward to the light !
Here we are masters till our Lord and King shall come.
The ghastly births of Night, Apollo, beauty's friend,
Disperses back to their abysses, or subdues.

PHORCYAS *enters on the threshold, between the door-posts.*

CHORUS.

Much have I seen, and strange, though the ringlets
Youthful and thick still wave round my temples :
Terrors a many, war and its horrors
Witnessed I once in Ilion's night
When it fell.
Thorough the clanging, cloudy-covered din of
Onrushing warriors, heard I th' Immortals
Shouting in anger, heard I Bellona's

Iron-toned voice resound from without
City-wards.'

Ah ! the City yet stood, with its
Bulwarks ; Ilion safely yet
Towered : but spreading from house over
House, the flame did begirdle us ;
Sea-like, red, loud, and billowy ;
Hither, thither, as tempest floods,
Over the death-circled City.

Flying, saw I, through heat and through
Gloom and glare of that fire-ocean,
Shapes of Gods in their wrathfulness,
Stalking grim, fierce, and terrible,
Giant-high, through the luridly
Flame-dyed dusk of that vapour.

Did I see it, or was it but
Terror of heart that fashioned
Forms so affrighting ? Know can I
Never : but here that I view this
Horrible Thing with my own eyes,
This of a surety believe I :
Yea, I could clutch 't in my fingers,
Did not, from Shape so dangerous,
Fear at a distance keep me.

Which of old Phorcys'
Daughters then art thou ?
For I compare thee to
That generation.
Art thou belike of the Graiæ,
Gray-born, one eye and one tooth

Using alternate,
Child or descendant?

Darest thou, Haggard,
Close by such beauty,
'Fore the divine glance of
Phœbus display thee?
But display as it pleases thee;
For the ugly he heedeth not,
As his bright eye yet never did
Look on a shadow.

But us mortals, alas for it!
Law of Destiny burdens us
With the unspeakable eye-sorrow
Which such a sight, unblessed, detestable,
Doth in lovers of beauty awaken.

Nay then, hear, since thou shamelessly
Com'st forth fronting us, hear only
Curses, hear all manner of threatenings,
Out of the scornful lips of the happier
That were made by the Deities.

PHORCYAS.

Old is the saw, but high and true remains its sense,
That Shame and Beauty ne'er, together hand in hand,
Were seen pursue their journey over the earth's green path.
Deep-rooted dwells an ancient hatred in these two;
So that wherever, on their way, one haps to meet
The other, each on its adversary turns its back;
Then hastens forth the faster on its separate road;
Shame all in sorrow, Beauty pert and light of mood;
Till the hollow night of Orcus catches it at length,

If age and wrinkles have not tamed it long before.
So you, ye wantons, wafted hither from strange lands,
I find in tumult, like the cranes' hoarse jingling flight,
That over our heads, in long-drawn cloud, sends down
Its creaking gabble, and tempts the silent wanderer that he look
Aloft at them a moment: but they go their way,
And he goes his; so also will it be with us.

Who then are ye, that here, in Bacchanalian wise,
Like drunk ones, ye dare uproar at this Palace gate?

Who then are ye, that at the Stewardess of the King's House
Ye howl, as at the moon the crabbed brood of dogs?
Think ye 'tis hid from me what manner of thing ye are?
Ye war-begotten, fight-bred, feather-headed crew!
Lascivious crew, seducing as seduced, that waste,
In rioting, alike the soldier's and the burgher's strength!
Here seeing you gathered, seems as a cicada-swarm
Had lighted, covering the herbage of the fields.
Consumers ye of other's thrift, ye greedy-mouthed
Quick squanderers of fruits men gain by tedious toil;
Cracked market-ware, stol'n, bought, and bartered troop of slaves!

We have thought it right to give so much of these singular expositions and altercations, in the words, as far as might be, of the parties themselves; happy could we, in any measure, have transfused the broad, yet rich and chaste, simplicity of these long iambics; or imitated the tone, as we have done the metre, of

that choral song; its rude earnestness, and tortuous, awkward-looking, artless strength, as we have done its dactyls and anapæsts. The task was no easy one; and we remain, as might have been expected, little contented with our efforts; having, indeed, nothing to boast of, except a sincere fidelity to the original. If the reader, through such distortion, can obtain any glimpse of *Helena* itself, he will not only pardon us, but thank us. To our own minds, at least, there is everywhere a strange, piquant, quite peculiar charm in these imitations of the old Grecian style: a dash of the ridiculous, if we might say so, is blended with the sublime, yet blended with it softly, and only to temper its austerity; for often, so graphic is the delineation, we could almost feel as if a vista were opened through the long gloomy distance of ages, and we, with our modern eyes and modern levity, beheld afar off, in clear light, the very figures of that old grave time; saw them again living in their old antiquarian costume and environment, and heard them audibly discourse in a dialect which had long been dead.

Of all this no man is more master than Goethe: as a modern-antique, his *Iphigenie* must be considered unrivalled in poetry. A similar thoroughly classical spirit will be found in this First Part of *Helena*; yet the manner of the two pieces is essentially different. Here, we should say, we are more reminded of Sophocles, perhaps of Æschylus, than of Euripides:

it is more rugged, copious, energetic, inartificial; a still more ancient style. How very primitive, for instance, are Helena and Phorcyas in their whole deportment here! How frank and downright in speech; above all, how minute and specific; no glimpse of "philosophical culture;" no such thing as a "general idea;" thus, every different object seems a new unknown one, and requires to be separately stated. In like manner, what can be more honest and edifying than the chant of the Chorus? With what inimitable *naïveté* they recur to the sack of Troy, and endeavour to convince themselves that they do actually see this "horrible Thing;" then lament the law of Destiny which dooms them to such "unspeakable eye-sorrow;" and finally, break forth into sheer cursing; to all which Phorcyas answers in the like free and plain-spoken fashion.

But to our story. This hard-tempered and so dreadfully ugly old lady the reader cannot help suspecting, at first sight, to be some cousin-german of Mephistopheles, or indeed that great Actor of all Work himself; which latter suspicion the devilish nature of the beldame, by degrees, confirms into a moral certainty. There is a sarcastic malice in the "wise old Stewardess" which cannot be mistaken. Meanwhile, the Chorus and the beldame indulge still farther in mutual abuse; she upbraiding them with their giddiness and wanton disposition; they chanting

unabatedly her extreme deficiency in personal charms. Helena, however, interposes; and the old Gorgon, pretending that she has not till now recognised the stranger to be her Mistress, smooths herself into gentleness, affects the greatest humility, and even appeals to her for protection against the insolence of these young ones. But wicked Phorcyas is only waiting her opportunity; still neither unwilling to wound, nor afraid to strike. Helena, to expel some unpleasant vapours of doubt, is reviewing her past history, in concert with Phorcyas; and observes that the latter had been appointed Stewardess by Menelaus, on his return from his Cretan expedition to Sparta. No sooner is Sparta mentioned, than the crone, with an officious air of helping out the story, adds:

Which thou forsookest, Ilion's tower-encircled town
Preferring, and the unexhausted joys of Love.

HELENA.

Remind me not of joys; an all-too heavy woe's
Infinitude soon followed, crushing breast and heart.

PHORCYAS.

But I have heard thou livest on earth a double life;
In Ilion seen, and seen the while in Egypt too.

HELENA.

Confound not so the weakness of my weary sense:
Here even, who or what I am, I know it not.

PHORCYAS.

Then I have heard how, from the hollow Realm of
Shades,
Achilles too did fervently unite himself to thee;
Thy earlier love reclaiming, spite of all Fate's laws.

HELENA.

To him the Vision, I a Vision joined myself:
It was a dream, the very words may teach us this.
But I am faint; and to myself a Vision grow.
[*Sinks into the arms of one division of the Chorus.*

CHORUS.

Silence! silence!
Evil-eyed, evil-tongued, thou!
Through so shrivelled-up, one-tooth'd a
Mouth, what good can come from that
Throat of horrors detestable—

—In which style they continue musically rating her, till "Helena has recovered, and again stands in the middle of the chorus;" when Phorcyas, with the most wheedling air, hastens to greet her, in a new sort of verse, as if nothing whatever had happened:

PHORCYAS.

Issues forth from passing cloud the sun of this bright
day:
If when veil'd she so could charm us, now her beams in
splendour blind.

As the world doth look before thee, in such gentle wise
thou look'st.
Let them call me so unlovely, what is lovely know I
well.

HELENA.

Come so wavering from the Void which in that faintness
circled me,
Glad I were to rest again a space; so weary are my
limbs.
Yet it well becometh queens, all mortals it becometh
well,
To possess their hearts in patience, and await what can
betide.

PHORCYAS.

Whilst thou standest in thy greatness, in thy beauty
here,
Says thy look that thou commandest: what command'st
thou? Speak it out.

HELENA.

To conclude your quarrel's idle loitering be prepared:
Haste, arrange the Sacrifice the King commanded me.

PHORCYAS.

All is ready in the Palace, bowl and tripod, sharp-ground
axe
For besprinkling, for befuming: now the Victim let us

HELENA.

This the King appointed not.

PHORCYAS.

Spoke not of this? O word of woe!

HELENA.

What strange sorrow overpowers thee?

PHORCYAS.

Queen, 'tis thou he meant.

HELENA.

I?

PHORCYAS.

And these.

CHORUS.

O woe! O woe!

PHORCYAS.

Thou fallest by the axe's stroke.

HELENA.

Horrible, yet look'd for: hapless I!

PHORCYAS.

Inevitable seems it me.

CHORUS.

Ah, and us? What will become of us?

PHORCYAS.

She dies a noble death:
Ye, on the high Beam within that bears the rafters and the roof,
As in birding-time so many woodlarks, in a row, shall sprawl.

[*Helena and Chorus stand astounded and terror-struck; in expressive, well-concerted grouping.*

PHORCYAS.

Poor spectres !—All like frozen statues there ye stand,
In fright to leave the Day which not belongs to you.
No man or spectre, more than you, is fond to quit
The Upper Light; yet rescue, respite finds not one :
All know it, all believe it, few delight in it.
Enough, 'tis over with you ! And so let's to work.

How the cursed old beldame enjoys the agony of these poor Shades; nay, we suspect, she is laughing in her sleeve at the very Classicism of this Drama, which she herself has contrived, and is even now helping to enact! Observe, she has quitted her octameter trochaics again, and taken to plain blank verse; a sign, perhaps, that she is getting weary of the whole Classical concern! But however this may be, she now claps her hands, whereupon certain distorted dwarf figures appear at the door, and, with great speed and agility, at her order, bring forth the sacrificial apparatus; on which she fails not to descant demonstratively, explaining the purpose of the several articles as they are successively fitted up before her. Here is the "gold-horned altar," the "axe glittering over its silver edge;" then there must be "water-urns to wash the black blood's defilement," and a "precious mat" to kneel on, for the victim is to be beheaded queenlike. On all hands mortal horror! But Phorcyas hints darkly that there is still a way of escape left; this, of course, every one is in deepest eagerness to learn. Here, one would think,

she might for once come to the point without digression but Phorcyas has her own way of stating a fact. She thus commences:

PHORCYAS.

Whoso, collecting store of wealth, at home abides
To parget in due season his high dwelling's walls,
And prudent guard his roof from inroad of the rain,
With him, through long still years of life, it shall be well.
But he who lightly, in his folly, bent to rove,
O'ersteps with wand'ring foot his threshold's sacred line,
Will find, at his return, the ancient place indeed
Still there, but else all alter'd, if not overthrown.

HELENA.

Why these trite saws? Thou wert to teach us, not
reprove.

PHORCYAS.

Historical it is, is nowise a reproof.
Sea-roving, steer'd King Menelaus brisk from bay to bay;
Descended on all ports and isles, a plundering foe,
And still came back with booty, which yet moulders here.
Then by the walls of Ilion spent he ten long years;
How many in his homeward voyage were hard to know.
But all this while how stands it here with Tyndarus'
High house? How stands it with his own domains
around?

HELENA.

Is love of railing, then, so interwoven with thee
That thus, except to chide, thou canst not move thy lips?

PHORCYAS.

So many years forsaken stood the mountain glen,

Which, north from Sparta, towards the higher land
ascends
Behind Taygetus ; where, as yet a merry brook,
Eurotas gurgles on, and then, along our Vale,
In sep'rate streams abroad outflowing feeds your Swans.
There, backwards in the rocky hills, a daring race
Have fix'd themselves, forth issuing from Cimmerian
Night ;
An inexpugnable stronghold have piled aloft.
From which they harry land and people as they please.

HELENA.

How could they ? All impossible it seems to me.

PHORCYAS.

Enough of time they had : 'tis haply twenty years.

HELENA.

Is One the Master ? Are there Robbbers many ; leagued ?

PHORCYAS.

Not Robbers these : yet many, and the Master One.
Of him I say no ill, though hither too he came.
What might not he have took ? yet did content himself
With some small Present, so he called it, Tribute not

HELENA.

How looks he ?

PHORCYAS.

Nowise ill ! To me he pleasant look'd.
A jocund, gallant, hardy, handsome man it is,
And rational in speech, as of the Greeks are few.
We call the folk Barbarian ; yet I question much

If one there be so cruel, as at Ilion
Full many of our best heroes man-devouring were.
I do respect his greatness, and confide in him.
And for his Tower! this with your own eyes ye should see:
Another thing it is than clumsy boulder-work,
Such as our Fathers, nothing scrupling, huddled up,
Cyclopean, and like Cyclops-builders, one rude crag
On other rude crags tumbling: in that Tow'r of theirs
'Tis plumb and level all, and done by square and rule.
Look on it from without! Heav'nward it soars on high,
So straight, so tight of joint, and mirror-smooth as steel:
To clamber there—Nay, even your very Thought slides down—
And then, within, such courts, broad spaces, all around,
With masonry encompass'd of every sort and use:
There have ye arches, archlets, pillars, pillarlets,
Balconies, galleries, for looking out and in,
And coats of arms.

CHORUS.

Of arms? What mean'st thou?

PHORCYAS.

Ajax bore
A twisted Snake on his Shield, as ye yourselves have seen.
The Seven also before Thebes bore carved work
Each on his Shield; devices rich and full of sense:
There saw ye moon and stars of the nightly heaven's vault,
And goddesses, and heroes, ladders, torches, swords,
And dangerous tools, such as in storm o'erfall good towns.
Escutcheons of like sort our heroes also bear:

There see ye lions, eagles, claws besides, and bills,
Then buffalo-horns, and wings, and roses, peacock-tails ;
And bandelets, gold and black and silver, blue and red.
Suchlike are there hung up in Halls, row after row ;
In halls, so large, so lofty, boundless as the World ;
There might ye dance !

CHORUS.

Ha ! Tell us, are there dancers there ?

PHORCYAS.

The best on earth ! A golden-hair'd, fresh, younker band,
They breathe of youth : Paris alone so breath'd when to
Our Queen he came too near.

HELENA.

Thou quite dost lose
The tenor of thy story : say me thy last word.

PHORCYAS.

Thyself wilt say it : say it earnestly, audibly, Yes !
Next moment, I surround thee with that Tow'r.

The step is questionable : for is not this Phorcyas a person of the most suspicious character ; or rather, is it not certain that she is a Turk in grain, and will, almost of a surety, go how it may, turn good into bad ? And yet, what is to be done ? A trumpet, said to be that of Menelaus, sounds in the distance, at which the Chorus shrink together in increased terror. Phorcyas coldly reminds them of Deiphobus with his slit nose, as a

small token of Menelaus' turn of thinking on these matters; supposes, however, that there is now nothing for it but to wait the issue, and die with propriety. Helena has no wish to die, either with propriety or impropriety; she pronounces, though with a faltering resolve, the definitive yes. A burst of joy breaks from the Chorus; thick fog rises all round, in the midst of which, as we learn from their wild, tremulous chant, they feel themselves hurried through the air: Eurotas is swept from sight, and the cry of its Swans fades ominously away in the distance; for now, as we suppose, "Tyndarus' high House," with all its appendages, is rushing back into the depths of the Past; old *Lacedæmon* has again become new *Misitra*; only Taygetus, with another name remains unchanged: and the King of Rivers feeds among his sedges quite a different race of Swans than those of Leda! The mist is passing away, but yet, to the horror of the Chorus, no clear daylight returns. Dim masses rise round them: Phorcyas has vanished. Is it a castle? Is it a cavern? They find themselves in the "Interior Court of the Tower, surrounded with rich fantastic buildings of the Middle Ages!"

If, hitherto, we have moved along with considerable convenience over ground singular enough indeed, yet, the nature of it once understood, affording firm footing and no unpleasant scenery, we come now to a strange

mixed element, in which it seems as if neither walking, swimming, nor, even flying, could rightly avail us. We have cheerfully admitted, and honestly believed, that Helena and her Chorus were Shades; but now they appear to be changing into mere Ideas, mere Metaphors, or poetic Thoughts! Faust too—for *he*, as every one sees, must be lord of this Fortress—is a much altered man since we last met him. Nay, sometimes we could fancy he were only *acting a part* on this occasion; were a mere mummer, representing not so much his own natural *personality* as some shadow and impersonation of his *history*; not so much his own Faustship as the Tradition of Faust's adventures, and the Genius of the People among whom this took its rise. For, indeed, he has strange gifts of flying through the air, and living, in apparent friendship and contentment, with mere Eidolons; and, being excessively reserved withal, he becomes not a little enigmatic. In fact, our whole "Interlude" changes its character at this point: the Greek style passes abruptly into the Spanish; at one bound we have left the *Seven before Thebes*, and got into the *Vida es Sueño*. The action, too, becomes more and more typical; or rather, we should say, half-typical; for it will neither hold rightly together as allegory nor as matter of fact.

Thus do we see ourselves hesitating on the verge of a wondrous region, "neither sea nor good dry land;" full of shapes and musical tones, but all dim, fluctuating,

unsubstantial, chaotic. Danger there is that the critic may require "both oar and sail;" nay, it will be well if, like that other great Traveller, he meet not some vast vacuity, where, all unawares,

> Fluttering his pennons vain, plumb down he drop
> Ten thousand fathom deep . . . .

and so keep falling till

> The strong rebuff of some tumultuous cloud,
> Instinct with fire and nitre, hurry him
> As many miles aloft . . . .

—Meaning, probably, that he is to be "blown-up" by nonplused and justly exasperated Review-reviewers! Nevertheless, unappalled by these possibilities, we venture forward into this impalpable Limbo; and must endeavour to render such account of the "sensible species" and "ghosts of defunct bodies" we may meet there, as shall be moderately satisfactory to the reader.

In the little Notice from the Author, quoted above, we were bid specially observe in what way and manner Faust would presume to court this World-beauty. We must say, his style of gallantry seems to us of the most chivalrous and high-flown description, if indeed it is not a little *euphuistic.* In their own eyes, Helena and her Chorus, encircled in this Gothic court, appear, for some minutes, no better than captives; but, suddenly issuing from galleries and portals, and descending the

stairs in stately procession, are seen a numerous suite of Pages, whose gay habiliments and red downy cheeks are greatly admired by the Chorus: these bear with them a throne and canopy, with footstools and cushions, and every other necessary apparatus of royalty; the portable machine, as we gather from the Chorus, is soon put together; and Helena, being reverently beckoned into the same, is thus forthwith constituted Sovereign of the Whole Establishment. To herself such royalty still seems a little dubious; but no sooner have the Pages, in long train, fairly descended, than "Faust appears above, on the stairs, in knightly court-dress of the Middle Ages, and with deliberate dignity comes down," astonishing the poor "feather-headed" Chorus with the gracefulness of his deportment and his more than human beauty. He leads with him a culprit in fetters, and, by way of introduction, explains to Helena that this man, Lynceus, has deserved death by his misconduct; but that to her, as Queen of the Castle, must appertain the right of dooming or of pardoning him. The crime of Lynceus is, indeed, of an extraordinary nature: he was Warder of the Tower; but now, though gifted, as his name imports, with the keenest vision, he has failed in warning Faust that so august a visitor was approaching, and thus occasioned the most dreadful breach of politeness. Lynceus pleads guilty: quick-sighted as a lynx in usual cases, he has been blinded with excess of light in this instance. While looking

towards the orient at the "course of morning," he noticed "a sun rise wonderfully in the south," and, all his senses taken captive by such surprising beauty, he no longer knew his right hand from his left, or could move a limb, or utter a word, to announce her arrival. Under these peculiar circumstances, Helena sees room for extending the royal prerogative; and after expressing unfeigned regret at this so fatal influence of her charms over the whole male sex, dismisses the Warder with a reprieve. We must beg our readers to keep an eye on this Innamorato, for there may be meaning in him. Here is the pleading, which produced so fine an effect, given in his own words:

Let me kneel and let me view her,
Let me live, or let me die,
Slave to this high woman, truer
Than a bondsman born, am I.

Watching o'er the course of morning
Eastward, as I mark it run,
Rose there, all the sky adorning,
Strangely in the south a sun.

Draws my look towards those places
Not the valley, not the height,
Not the earth's or heaven's spaces;
She alone the queen of light.

Eyesight truly hath been lent me,
Like the lynx on highest tree;

Boots not; for amaze hath shent me:
Do I dream, or do I see?

Knew I aught; or could I ever
Think of tow'r or bolted gate?
Vapours waver, vapours sever,
Such a goddess comes in state!

Eye and heart I must surrender
Drowned as in a radiant sea;
That high creature with her splendour
Blinding all hath blinded me.

I forgot the warder's duty;
Trumpet, challenge, word of call:
Chain me, threaten: sure this Beauty
Stills thy anger, saves her thrall.

Save him accordingly she did: but no sooner is he dismissed, and Faust has made a remark on the multitude of "arrows" which she is darting forth on all sides, than Lynceus returns in a still madder humour. "Re-enter Lynceus with a Chest, and Men carrying other Chests behind him."

LYNCEUS.

Thou see'st me, Queen, again advance.
The wealthy begs of thee one glance;
He look'd at thee, and feels e'er since
As beggar poor, and rich as prince.

What was I erst? What am I grown?
What have I meant, or done, or known?

What boots the sharpest force of eyes?
Back from thy throne it baffled flies.

From Eastward marching came we on,
And soon the West was lost and won:
A long broad army forth we pass'd,
The foremost knew not of the last.

The first did fall, the second stood,
The third hew'd-in with falchion good;
And still the next had prowess more,
Forgot the thousands slain before.

We stormed along, we rushed apace,
The masters we from place to place;
And where I lordly ruled to-day,
To-morrow another did rob and slay.

We looked; our choice was quickly made;
This snatch'd with him the fairest Maid,
That seized the Steer for burden bent,
The horses all and sundry went.

But I did love apart to spy
The rarest things could meet the eye:
Whate'er in others' hands I saw,
That was for me but chaff and straw.

For treasures did I keep a look,
My keen eyes pierc'd to every nook;
Into all pockets I could see,
Transparent each strong-box to me.

And heaps of Gold I gained this way,
And precious stones of clearest ray:—

Now where's the Diamond meet to shine?
'Tis meet alone for breast like thine.

So let the Pearl from depths of sea,
In curious stringlets wave on thee:
The Ruby for some covert seeks,
'Tis paled by redness of thy cheeks.

And so the richest treasure's brought
Before thy throne, as best it ought;
Beneath thy feet here let me lay
The fruit of many a bloody fray.

So many chests we now do bear;
More chests I have, and finer ware:
Think me but to be near thee worth
Whole treasure-vaults I empty forth.

For scarcely art thou hither sent,
All hearts and wills to thee are bent;
Our riches, reason, strength we must
Before the loveliest lay as dust.

All this I reckon'd great, and mine,
Now small I reckon it, and thine.
I thought it worthy, high, and good;
'Tis nought, poor and misunderstood.

So dwindles what my glory was,
A heap of mown and withered grass:
What worth it had, and now does lack,
O, with one kind look, give it back!

FAUST.

Away! away! take back the bold-earned load,

Not blamed indeed, but also not rewarded.
Hers is already whatsoe'er our Tower
Of costliness conceals: Go heap me treasures
On treasures, yet with order : let the blaze
Of pomp unspeakable appear ; the ceilings
Gem-fretted, shine like skies ; a Paradise
Of lifeless life create. Before her feet
Unfolding quick, let flow'ry carpet roll
Itself from flow'ry carpet, that her step
May light on softness, and her eye meet nought
But splendour blinding only not the Gods.

LYNCEUS.

Small is what our Lord doth say ;
Servants do it ; 'tis but play :
For o'er all we do or dream
Will this Beauty reign supreme.
Is not all our host grown tame ?
Every sword is blunt and lame.
To a form of such a mould
Sun himself is dull and cold
To the richness of that face,
What is beauty, what is grace,
Loveliness we saw or thought ?
All is empty, all is nought.

And herewith *exit* Lynceus, and we see no more of him! We have said that we thought there might be method in this madness. In fact, the allegorical, or at least fantastic and figurative, character of the whole action is growing more and more decided every moment. Helena, we must conjecture, is, in the course

of this her real historical intrigue with Faust, to present, at the same time, some dim adumbration of Grecian Art, and its flight to the Northern Nations, when driven by stress of war from its own country. Faust's Tower will, in this case, afford not only a convenient station for *lifting blackmail* over the neighbouring district, but a cunning, though vague and fluctuating, emblem of the product of Teutonic Mind; the Science, Art, Institutions of the Northmen, of whose Spirit and Genius he himself may in some degree become the representative. In this way the extravagant homage and admiration paid to Helena are not without their meaning. The manner of her arrival, enveloped as she was in thick clouds, and frightened onwards by hostile trumpets, may also have more or less propriety. And who is Lynceus, the mad Watchman? We cannot but suspect him of being a Schoolman Philosopher, or School Philosophy itself in disguise; and that this wonderful "march" of his has a covert illusion to the great "march of intellect," which did march in those old ages, though only "at ordinary time." We observe, the military, one after the other, all fell; for discoverers, like other men, must die; but "still the next had prowess more," and forgot the thousands that had sunk in clearing the way for him. However, Lynceus, in his love of plunder, did not take "the fairest maid," nor the "steer" fit for burden, but rather jewels and other rare articles of value; in which

quest his high power of eyesight proved of great service to him. Better had it been, perhaps, to have done as others did, and seized "the fairest maid," or even the "steer" fit for burden, or one of the "horses" which were in such request: for, when he quitted practical Science and the Philosophy of Life, and addicted himself to curious subtleties and Metaphysical crotchets, what did it avail him? At the first glance of the Grecian beauty, he found that it was "nought, poor, and misunderstood." His extraordinary obscuration of vision on Helena's approach; his narrow 'scape from death, on that account, at the hands of Faust; his pardon by the fair Greek; his subsequent magnanimous offer to her, and discourse with his master on the subject—might give rise to various considerations. But we must not loiter, questioning the strange Shadows of that strange country, who, besides, are apt to mystify one. Our nearest business is to get across it; we again proceed.

Whoever or whatever Faust and Helena may be they are evidently fast rising into high favour with each other; as, indeed, from so generous a gallant, and so fair a dame, was to be anticipated. She invites him to sit with her on the throne, so instantaneously acquired by force of her charms; to which graceful proposal he, after kissing her hand in knightly wise, fails not to accede. The courtship now advances apace. Helena admires the dialect of Lynceus, and

how "one word seemed to kiss the other"—for the Warder, as we saw, speaks in doggrel; and she cannot but wish that she also had some such talent. Faust assures her that nothing is more easy than this same practice of rhyme: it is but speaking right from the heart, and the rest follows of course. Withal he proposes that they should make a trial of it themselves. The experiment succeeds to mutual satisfaction; for not only can they two build the lofty rhyme in concert, with all convenience, but, in the course of a page or two of such crambo, many love tokens come to light; nay, we find by the Chorus that the wooing has well-nigh reached a happy end; at least, the two are "sitting near and nearer each other,—shoulder on shoulder, knee by knee, hand in hand, they are swaying over the throne's up-cushioned lordliness," which, surely, are promising symptoms.

Such ill-timed dalliance is abruptly disturbed by the entrance of Phorcyas, now, as ever, a messenger of evil, with malignant tidings that Menelaus is at hand, with his whole force to storm the Castle, and ferociously avenge his new injuries. An immense "explosion of signals from the towers, of trumpets, clarions, military music, and the march of numerous armies," confirms the news. Faust, however, treats the matter coolly; chides the unceremonious trepidation of Phorcyas, and summons his men of war; who accordingly enter, steel-clad, in military pomp, and,

quitting their battalions, gather round him to take his orders. In a wild Pindaric ode, delivered with due emphasis, he directs them not so much how they are to conquer Menelaus, whom doubtless he knows to be a sort of dream, as how they are respectively to manage and partition the Country they shall hereby acquire. Germanus is to have the "bays of Corinth;" while "Achaia, with its hundred dells," is recommended to the care of Goth: the host of the Franks must go towards Elis; Messene is to be the Saxon's share; and Normann is to clear the seas, and make Argolis great. Sparta, however, is to continue the territory of Helena, and be queen and patroness of these inferior dukedoms. In all this, are we to trace some faint, changeful shadow of the National Character, and respective Intellectual Performance of the several European tribes? Or, perhaps, of the real History of the Middle Ages; the irruption of the northern swarms, issuing, like Faust and his air-warriors, "from Cimmerian Night," and spreading over so many fair regions? Perhaps of both, and of more; perhaps properly of neither: for the whole has a chameleon character, changing hue as we look on it. However, be this as it may, the Chorus cannot sufficiently admire Faust's strategic faculty; and the troops march off, without speech indeed, but evidently in the highest spirits. He himself concludes with another rapid dithyrambic, describing the Peninsula of Greece, or rather, perhaps,

typically the Region of true Poesy, "kissed by the sea-waters," and "knit to the last mountain-branch" of the firm land. There is a wild glowing fire in these two odes; a musical indistinctness, yet enveloping a rugged, keen sense, which, were the gift of rhyme so common as Faust thinks it, we should have pleasure in presenting it to our readers. Again and again we think of Calderon and his *Life a Dream*.

Faust, as he resumes his seat by Helena, observes that "she is sprung from the highest gods, and belongs to the first world alone." It is not meet that bolted towers should encircle her; and near by Sparta, over the hills, "Arcadia blooms in eternal strength of youth, a blissful abode for them two." "Let thrones pass into groves: Arcadian-free be such felicity!" No sooner said than done. Our Fortress, we suppose, rushes asunder like a Palace of Air, for "*the scene altogether changes. A series of Grottoes now are shut in by close Bowers. Shady Grove, to the foot of the Rocks which encircle the place. Faust and Helena are not seen. The Chorus, scattered around, lie sleeping.*"

In Arcadia, the business grows wilder than ever. Phorcyas, who has now become wonderfully civil, and, notwithstanding her ugliness, stands on the best footing with the poor, light-headed, Cicada-swarm of a Chorus, awakes them to hear and see the wonders that have happened so shortly. It appears, too, that there are certain "Bearded Ones" (we suspect, Devils)

waiting with anxiety, "sitting watchful there below," to see the issue of this extraordinary transaction; but of these Phorcyas gives her silly women no hint whatever. She tells them, in glib phrase, what great things are in the wind. Faust and Helena have been happier than mortals in these grottoes. Phorcyas, who was in waiting, gradually glided away, seeking "roots, moss, and rinds," on household duty bent, and so "they two remained alone."

CHORUS.

Talk'st as if within those grottoes lay whole tracts of
country,
Wood and meadow, rivers, lakes: what tales thou palm'st
on us!

PHORCYAS.

Sure enough, ye foolish creatures! These are unexplored
recesses;
Hall runs out on hall, spaces there on spaces: these I
musing traced.
But at once re-echoes from within a peal of laughter:
Peeping in, what is it? Leaps a boy from Mother's
breast to Father's,
From the Father to the Mother: such a fondling, such a
dandling,
Foolish Love's caressing, teasing; cry of jest, and shriek
of pleasure,
In their turn do stun me quite.
Naked, without wings a Genius, Faun in humour without
coarseness,

Springs he sportful on the ground; but the ground reverberating,
Darts him up to airy heights; and at the third, the second gambol,
Touches he the vaulted roof.

Frightened cries the Mother: Bound away, away, and as thou pleasest,
But, my Son, beware of Flying; wings nor power of flight are thine.
And the Father thus advises: In the Earth resides the virtue
Which so fast doth send thee upwards; touch but with thy toe the surface,
Like the Earthborn, old Antæus, straightway thou art strong again.
And so skips he hither, thither, on these jagged rocks; from summit
Still to summit, all about, like stricken ball rebounding, springs.

But at once in cleft of some rude cavern sinking has he vanished,
And so seems it we have lost him. Mother mourning, Father cheers her;
Shrug my shoulders I, and look about me. But again, behold what vision!
Are there treasures lying here concealed? There he is again, and garments
Glittering, flower-bestriped has on.
Tassels waver from his arms, about his bosom flutter breast-knots,

In his hand the golden Lyre; wholly like a little Phœbus,
Steps he light of heart upon the beetling cliffs: astonished stand we,
And the Parents, in their rapture, fly into each other's arms.
For what glittering 's that about his head? Were hard to say what glitters,
Whether Jewels and gold, or Flame of all-subduing strength of soul.
And with such a bearing moves he, in himself this boy announces
Future Master of all Beauty, whom the Melodies Eternal
Do inform through every fibre; and forthwith so shall ye hear him,
And forthwith so shall ye see him, to your uttermost amazement.

The Chorus suggest, in their simplicity, that this elastic little urchin may have some relationship to the "Son of Maia," who, in old times, whisked himself so nimbly out of his swaddling-clothes, and stole the "Sea-ruler's trident" and "Hephæstos' tongs," and various other articles, before he was well span-long. But Phorcyas declares all this to be superannuated fable, unfit for modern uses. And now "*a beautiful purely melodious music of stringed instruments resounds from the Cave. All listen, and soon appear deeply moved. It continues playing in full tone;*" while Euphorion, in person, makes his appearance, "*in*

the costume above described;" larger of stature, but no less frolicsome and tuneful.

Our readers are aware that this Euphorion, the offspring of Northern Character wedded to Grecian Culture, frisks it here not without reference to Modern Poesy, which had a birth so precisely similar. Sorry are we that we cannot follow him through these fine warblings and trippings on the light fantastic toe: to our ears there is a quick, pure, small-toned music in them, as perhaps of elfin bells when the Queen of Faëry rides by moonlight. It is, in truth, a graceful emblematic dance, this little life of Euphorion; full of meanings and half-meanings. The history of Poetry, traits of individual Poets; the Troubadours, the Three Italians; glimpses of all things, full vision of nothing! —Euphorion grows rapidly, and passes from one pursuit to anot'er. Quitting his boyish gambols, he takes to dancing and romping with the Chorus; and this in a style of tumult which rather dissatisfies Faust. The wildest and coyest of these damsels he seizes with avowed intent of snatching a kiss; but, alas, she resists, and, still more singular, "*flashes up in flame into the air;*" inviting him, perhaps in mockery, to follow her, and "catch his vanished purpose." Euphorion shakes off the remnants of the flame, and now, in a wilder humour, mounts on the crags, begins to talk of courage and battle; higher and higher he rises, till the Chorus see him on the topmost cliff,

shining "in harness as for victory:" and yet, though at such a distance, they still hear his tones, neither is his figure diminished in their eyes; which indeed, as they observe, always is, and should be, the case with "sacred Poesy," though it mounts heavenward, farther and farther, till it "glitter like the fairest star." But Euphorion's life-dance is near ending. From his high peak, he catches the sound of war, and fires at it, and longs to mix in it, let Chorus and Mother and Father say what they will.

EUPHORION.

And hear ye thunders on the ocean,
And thunders roll from tower and wall;
And host with host, in fierce commotion,
See mixing at the trumpet's call.
And to die in strife
Is the law of life,
That is certain once for all.

HELENA, FAUST, *and* CHORUS.

What a horror! Spoken madly!
Wilt thou die? Then what must I?

EUPHORION.

Shall I view it, safe and gladly?
No! to share it will I hie.

HELENA, FAUST, *and* CHORUS.

Fatal are such haughty things;
War is for the stout.

EUPHORION.

Ha !—and a pair of wings
Folds itself out !
Thither ! I must ! I must !
'Tis my hest to fly !

[*He casts himself into the air ; his Garments support him for a moment ; his head radiates, a Train of Light follows him.*

CHORUS.

Icarus ! earth and dust !
O, woe ! thou mount'st too high.

[*A beautiful Youth rushes down at the feet of the Parents ; you fancy you recognise in the dead a well-known form ; but the bodily part instantly disappears ; the gold Crownlet mounts like a comet to the sky ; Coat, Mantle, and Lyre are left lying.*

HELENA *and* FAUST.

Joy soon changes to woe,
And mirth to heaviest moan.

EUPHORION'S *voice* (*from beneath*).

Let me not to realms below
Descend, O mother, alone !

The prayer is soon granted. The Chorus chant a dirge over the remains, and then :

HELENA (*to* FAUST).

A sad old saying proves itself again in me,
Good hap with beauty hath no long abode.

So with Love's band is Life's asunder rent :
Lamenting both I clasp thee in my arms
Once more, and bid thee painfully farewell.
Persephoneia, take my boy, and with him me.

[*She embraces Faust; her Body melts away; Garment and Veil remain in his arms.*

PHORCYAS (*to* FAUST).

Hold fast what now alone remains to thee.
That Garment quit not. They are tugging there,
These Demons at the skirt of it ; would fain
To the Nether Kingdoms take it down. Hold fast:
The goddess it is not, whom thou hast lost,
Yet godlike is it. See thou use aright
The priceless high bequest, and soar aloft ;
'T will lift thee away above the common world,
Far up to Æther, so thou canst endure.
We meet again, far, very far from hence.

[*Helena's Garments unfold into Clouds, encircle Faust, raise him aloft, and float away with him. Phorcyas picks up Euphorion's Coat, Mantle, and Lyre from the Ground, comes forward into the Proscenium, holds these Remains aloft, and says:*

Well, fairly found be happily won !
'Tis true, the Flame is lost and gone :
But well for us we have still this stuff !
A gala-dress to dub our poets of merit,
And make guild-brethren snarl and cuff ;
And can't they borrow the Body and Spirit ?
At least, I'll lend them Clothes enough.

[*Sits down in the Proscenium at the foot of a pillar.*

The rest of the personages are now speedily disposed of. Panthalis, the Leader of the Chorus, and the only one of them who has shown any glimmerings of Reason, or of aught beyond mere sensitive life, mere love of Pleasure and fear of Pain, proposes that, being now delivered from the soul-confusing spell of the "Thessalian Hag," they should forthwith return to Hades, to bear Helena company. But none will volunteer with her; so she goes herself. The Chorus have lost their taste for Asphodel Meadows, and playing so subordinate a part in Orcus: they prefer abiding in the Light of Day, though, indeed, under rather peculiar circumstances; being no longer "Persons," they say, but a kind of Occult Qualities, as we conjecture, and Poetic Inspirations, residing in various natural objects. Thus, one division become a sort of invisible Hamadryads, and have their being in Trees, and their joy in the various movements, beauties, and products of Trees. A second change into Echoes; a third, into the Spirits of Brooks; and a fourth take up their abode in Vineyards, and delight in the manufacture of Wine. No sooner have these several parties made up their minds, than the *Curtain falls;* and Phorcyas "*in the Proscenium rises in gigantic size; but steps down from her cothurni, lays her Mask and Veil aside, and shows herself as Mephistopheles, in order, so far as may be necessary, to comment on the piece, by way of Epilogue.*"

Such is *Helena*, the *interlude in Faust.* We have all the desire in the world to hear Mephisto's Epilogue; but far be it from us to take the word out of so gifted a mouth! In the way of commentary on *Helena*, we ourselves have little more to add. The reader sees, in general, that Faust is to save himself from the straits and fetters of worldly life in the loftier regions of Art, or in that temper of mind by which alone those regions can be reached, and permanently dwelt in. Farther also, that this doctrine is to be stated emblematically and parabolically; so that it might seem as if, in Goethe's hands, the history of Faust, commencing among the realities of every-day existence, superadding to these certain spiritual agencies, and passing into a more aërial character as it proceeds, may fade away, at its termination, into a phantasmagoric region, where symbol and thing signified are no longer clearly distinguished; and thus the final result be curiously and significantly indicated, rather than directly exhibited. With regard to the special purport of Euphorion, Lynceus, and the rest, we have nothing more to say at present; nay, perhaps we may have already said too much. For it must not be forgotten by the commentator, (and will not, of a surety, be forgotten by Mephistopheles, whenever he may please to deliver his Epilogue, that *Helena* is not an allegory, but a phantasmagory; not a type of one thing, but a vague, fluctuating, fitful adumbration

of many. This is no Picture painted on canvas, with mere material colours, and steadfastly abiding our scrutiny; but rather it is like the Smoke of a Wizard's Cauldron, in which, as we gaze on its flickering tints and wild splendours, thousands of strangest shapes unfold themselves, yet no one will abide with us; and thus, as Goethe says elsewhere, "We are reminded of Nothing and of All."

Properly speaking, *Helena* is what the Germans call a *Mährchen* (Fabulous Tale), a species of fiction they have particularly excelled in, and of which Goethe has already produced more than one distinguished specimen. Some day we propose to translate, for our readers, that little piece of his, deserving to be named, as it is, the *Mährchen*, and which we must agree with a great critic in reckoning the "Tale of all Tales." As to the composition of this *Helena*, we cannot but perceive it to be deeply studied, appropriate, and successful. It is wonderful with what fidelity the Classical style is maintained throughout the earlier part of the Poem; how skilfully it is at once united to the Romantic style of the latter part, and made to reappear, at intervals, to the end. And then the small half-secret touches of sarcasm, the curious little traits by which we get a peep behind the curtain! Figure, for instance, that so transient allusion to these "Bearded Ones sitting watchful there below," and then their tugging at Helena's Mantle to pull it down with

them. By such slight hints does Mephistopheles point out our Whereabout; and ever and anon remind us, that not on the firm earth, but on the wide and airy Deep, has he spread his strange pavilion, where, in magic light, so many wonders are displayed to us.

Had we chanced to find that Goethe, in other instances, had ever written one line without meaning, or many lines without a deep and true meaning, we should not have thought this little cloud-picture worthy of such minute development, or such careful study. In that case, too, we should never have seen the true *Helena* of Goethe, but some false one of our own too indolent imagination; for this Drama, as it grows clearer, grows also more beautiful and complete; and the third, the fourth perusal of it pleases far better than the first. Few living artists would deserve such faith from us; but few also would so well reward it.

On the general relation of *Helena* to *Faust*, and the degree of fitness of the one for the other, it were premature to speak more expressly at present. We have learned, on authority which we may justly reckon the best, that Goethe is even now engaged in preparing the entire Second Part of Faust, into which this *Helena* passes as a component part. With the third *Lieferung* of his Works, we understand, the beginning of that Second Part is to be published: we shall then, if need be, feel more qualified to speak.

For the present, therefore, we take leave of *Helena*

and *Faust*, and of their author: but with regard to the latter, our task is nowise ended; indeed, as yet, hardly begun; for it is not in the province of the *Mährchen* that Goethe will ever become most interesting to English readers. But, like his own Euphorion, though he rises aloft into Æther, he derives, Antæus-like, his strength from the Earth. The dullest plodder has not a more practical understanding, or a sounder or more quiet character, than this most aërial and imaginative of poets. We hold Goethe to be the Foreigner at this era, who, of all others, the best, and the best by many degrees, deserves our study and appreciation. What help we individually can give in such a matter, we shall consider it a duty and a pleasure to have in readiness. We purpose to return, in our next Number, to the consideration of his Works and Character in general.*

* This Carlyle did in the Essay which has been placed first in the present volume.

DEATH OF GOETHE.

DEATH OF GOETHE.

[1832.]

IN the Obituary of these days stands one article of quite peculiar import; the time, the place, and particulars of which will have to be often repeated and re-written, and continue in remembrance many centuries: this namely, that Johann Wolfgang von Goethe died at Weimar on the 22nd March, 1832. It was about eleven in the morning; "he expired," says the record, "without any apparent suffering, having, a few minutes previously, called for paper for the purpose of writing, and expressed his delight at the arrival of spring." A beautiful death; like that of a soldier found faithful at his post, and in the cold hand his arms still grasped! The Poet's last words are a greeting of the new-awakened Earth; his last movement is to work at his appointed task. Beautiful; what we might call a Classic sacred-death; if it were not rather an Elijah-translation—in a chariot, not of fire and terror, but of hope and soft vernal sunbeams! It was

at Frankfort-on-the-Main, on the 28th of August, 1749, that this man entered the world: and now, gently welcoming the birthday of his eighty-second spring, he closes his eyes, and takes farewell.

So, then, our Greatest has departed. That melody of life, with its cunning tones, which took captive ear and heart, has gone silent; the heavenly force that dwelt here victorious over so much, is here no longer; thus far, not farther, by speech and by act, shall the wise man utter himself forth. The End! What solemn meaning lies in that sound, as it peals mournfully through the soul, when a living friend has passed away! All now is closed, irrevocable; the changeful life-picture, growing daily into new coherence, under new touches and hues, has suddenly become completed and unchangeable; there as it lay, it is dipped, from this moment, in the æther of the Heavens and shines transfigured, to endure even so—for ever. Time and Time's Empire; stern, wide-devouring, yet not without their grandeur! The week-day man, who was one of us, has put on the garment of Eternity, and become radiant and triumphant; the Present is all at once the Past; Hope is suddenly cut away, and only the backward vistas of Memory remain, shone on by a light that proceeds not from this earthly sun.

The death of Goethe, even for the many hearts that personally loved him, is not a thing to be lamented

over; is to be viewed, in his own spirit, as a thing full of greatness and sacredness. For all men it is appointed once to die. To this man the full measure of a man's life had been granted, and a course and task such as to only a few in the whole generations of the world: what else could we hope or require but that now he should be called hence, and have leave to depart, having finished the work that was given him to do? If his course, as we may say of him more justly than of any other, was like the Sun's, so also was his going down. For, indeed, as the material Sun is the eye and revealer of all things, so is Poetry, so is the World-Poet in a spiritual sense. Goethe's life, too, if we examine it, is well represented in that emblem of a solar Day. Beautifully rose our summer sun, gorgeous in the red fervid east, scattering the spectres and sickly damps (of both of which there were enough to scatter); strong, benignant in his noonday clearness, walking triumphant through the upper realms; and now, mark also how he sets! "*So stirbt ein Held; anbetungsvoll*, So dies a hero; to be worshipped!"

And yet, when the inanimate material sun has sunk and disappeared, it will happen that we stand to gaze into the still-glowing west; and there rise great pale motionless clouds, like coulisses or curtains, to close the flame-theatre within; and then, in that death-pause

of the Day, an unspeakable feeling will come over us: it is as if the poor sounds of Time, those hammerings of tired Labour on his anvils, those voices of simple men, had become awful and supernatural; as if in listening, we could hear them "mingle with the over-pealing tone of old Eternity." In such moments the secrets of Life lie opener to us; mysterious things flit over the soul; Life itself seems holier, wonderful, and fearful. How much more when our sunset was of a living sun; and *its* bright countenance and shining return to us, not on the morrow, but "no more again, at all, for ever!" In such a scene, silence, as over the mysterious great, is for him that has some feeling thereof, the fittest mood. Nevertheless, by silence the distant is not brought into communion; the feeling of each is without response from the bosom of his brother. There are now, what some years ago there were not, English hearts that know something of what those three words, "Death of Goethe," mean; to such men, among their many thoughts on the event, which are not to be translated into speech, may these few, through that imperfect medium, prove acceptable.

"Death," says the philosopher, "is a commingling of Eternity with Time; in the death of a good man Eternity is seen looking through Time." With such a sublimity here offered to eye and heart, it is not unnatural to look with new earnestness before and

behind, and ask, What space in those years and æons of computed Time, this man with his activity may influence; what relation to the world of change and mortality, which the earthly name Life, he who is even now called to the Immortals has borne and may bear.

Goethe, it is commonly said, made a New Era in Literature; a Poetic Era began with him, the end or ulterior tendencies of which are yet nowise generally visible. This common saying is a true one; and true with a far deeper meaning than, to the most, it conveys. Were the Poet but a sweet sound and singer, solacing the ear of the idle with pleasant songs; and the new Poet one who could sing his idle, pleasant song to a new air—we should account him a small matter, and his performance small. But this man, it is not unknown to many, was a Poet in such a sense as the late generations have witnessed no other; as it is, in this generation, a kind of distinction to believe in the existence of, in the possibility of. The true Poet is ever, as of old, the Seer, whose eye has been gifted to discern the godlike Mystery of God's Universe, and decipher some new lines of its celestial writing; we can still call him a *Vates* and Seer; for he *sees* into this greatest of secrets, "the open secret;" hidden things become clear; how the Future (both resting on Eternity) is but another phasis of the Present: thereby

are his words in very truth prophetic; what he has spoken shall be done.

It begins now to be everywhere surmised that the real Force, which in this world all things must obey, is Insight, Spiritual Vision, and Determination. The Thought is parent of the Deed, nay, is living soul of it, and last and continual, as well as first mover of it; is the foundation and beginning and essence, therefore, of man's whole existence here below. In this sense, it has been said, the Word of man—the uttered Thought of man—is still a magic formula, whereby he rules the world. Do not the winds and waters, and all tumultuous powers—inanimate and animate—obey him? A poor, quite mechanical Magician speaks, and fire-winged ships cross the Ocean at his bidding. Or mark, above all, that "raging of the nations," wholly in contention, desperation, and dark chaotic fury; how the meek voice of a Hebrew Martyr and Redeemer stills it into order, and a savage Earth becomes kind and beautiful, and the habitation of horrid cruelty a temple of peace. The true Sovereign of the world, who moulds the world like soft wax, according to his pleasure, is he who lovingly *sees* into the world; the "inspired Thinker," whom in these days we name Poet. The true Sovereign is the Wise Man.

However, as the Moon, which can heave-up the Atlantic, sends not in her obedient billows at once, but

gradually; and the Tide, which swells to-day on our shores, and washes every creek, rose in the bosom of the great Ocean—astronomers assure us—eight-and-forty hours ago; and indeed, all world-movements, by nature deep, are by nature calm, and flow and swell onwards with a certain majestic slowness; so, too, with the Impulse of a Great Man, and the effect he has to manifest on other men. To such a one we may grant some generation or two before the celestial Impulse he impressed on the world will universally proclaim itself, and become (like the working of the Moon) if still not intelligible, yet palpable, to all men; some generation or two more, wherein it has to grow, and expand, and envelop all things, before it can reach its acme; and thereafter mingling with other movements and new Impulses, at length cease to require a specific observation or designation. Longer or shorter such period may be, according to the nature of the Impulse itself, and of the elements it works in; according, above all, as the Impulse was intrinsically great and deep-reaching, or only wide-spread, superficial, and transient. Thus, if David Hume is at this hour pontiff of the world, and rules most hearts, and guides most tongues (the hearts and tongues even of those that in vain rebel against him), there are nevertheless symptoms that his task draws towards completion; and now in the distance his successor becomes visible. On the other hand, we

have seen a Napoleon, like some gunpowder force (with which sort, indeed, he chiefly worked), explode his whole virtue suddenly, and thunder himself out and silent, in a space of five-and-twenty years. While, again, for a man of true greatness, working with spiritual implements, two centuries is no uncommon period; nay, on this Earth of ours there have been men whose Impulse had not completed its development till after fifteen hundred years, and might perhaps be seen still individually subsistent after two thousand.

But, as was once written, "though our clock strikes when there is a change from hour to hour, no hammer in the Horologe of Time peals through the universe to proclaim that there is a change from era to era." The true Beginning is oftenest unnoticed and unnoticeable. Thus do men go wrong in their reckoning and grope hither and thither, not knowing where they are, in what course their history runs. Within this last century, for instance, with its wild doings and destroyings, what hope, grounded on miscalculation, ending in disappointment! How many world-famous victories were gained and lost, dynasties founded and subverted, revolutions accomplished, constitutions sworn to; and ever the "new era" was come, was coming, yet still it came not, but the time continued sick! Alas, all these were but spasmodic convulsions of the death-sick time; the crisis of cure and regeneration to the time

was not there indicated. The real new era was when a Wise Man came into the world, with clearness of vision and greatness of soul, to accomplish this old high enterprise, amid these new difficulties, yet again: A Life of Wisdom. Such a man became, by Heaven's pre-appointment, in very deed the Redeemer of the time. Did he not bear the curse of the time? He was filled full with its scepticism, bitterness, hollowness, and thousandfold contradictions, till his heart was like to break; but he subdued all this, rose victorious over this, and manifoldly by word and act showed others that come after how to do the like. Honour to him who first "through the impassable paves a road!" Such, indeed, is the task of every great man; nay, of every good man in one or the other sphere, since goodness is greatness, and the good man, high or humble, is ever a martyr and "spiritual hero that ventures forward into the gulf for our deliverance." The gulf into which this man ventured, which he tamed and rendered habitable, was the greatest and most perilous of all, wherein truly all others lie included: *The whole distracted Existence of man is an age of Unbelief.* Whoso lives, whoso with earnest mind studies to live wisely in that mad element, may yet know, perhaps too well, what an enterprise was here; and for the Chosen Man of our time who could prevail in it, have the higher reverence, and a gratitude such as belongs to no other.

How far he prevailed in it, and by what means, with what endurances and achievements, will in due season be estimated. Those volumes called *Goethe's Works* will now receive no farther addition or alteration; and the record of his whole spiritual Endeavour lies written there—were the man or men but ready that could read it rightly! A glorious record, wherein he who would understand himself and his environment, who struggles for escape out of darkness into light as for the one thing needful, will long thankfully study. For the whole chaotic Time, what it has suffered, attained, and striven after, stands imaged there: interpreted, ennobled into poetic clearness. From the passionate longings and wailings of *Werter*, spoken as from the heart of all Europe; onwards through the wild unearthly melody of *Faust*, like the spirit-song of falling worlds; to that serenely smiling wisdom of *Meisters Lehrjahre*, and the *German Hafiz*—what an interval! and all enfolded in an ethereal music, as from unknown spheres, harmoniously uniting all. A long interval; and wide as well as long; for this was a universal man. History, Science, Art, human Activity under every aspect; the laws of Light in his *Farbenlehre*; the laws of wild Italian Life in his *Benvenuto Cellini*—nothing escaped him: nothing that he did not look into, that he did not see into. Consider, too, the genuineness of whatsoever he did; his hearty, idiomatic

way; simplicity with loftiness, and nobleness, and aërial grace! Pure works of Art, completed with an antique Grecian polish, as *Torquato Tasso*, as *Iphigenie*. Proverbs, *Xenien*, Patriarchal Sayings, which, since the Hebrew Scriptures were closed, we know not where to match; in whose homely depths lie often the materials for volumes.

To measure and estimate all this, as we said, the time is not come; a century hence will be the fitter time. He who investigates it best will find its meaning greatest, and be the readiest to acknowledge that it transcends him. Let the reader have *seen*, before he attempts to *oversee*. A poor reader, in the meanwhile, were he who discerned not here the authentic rudiments of that same New Era, whereof we have so often had false warning. Wondrously the wrecks and pulverised rubbish of ancient things, institutions, religions, forgotten noblenesses, made alive again by the breath of Genius, lie here in new coherence and incipient union, the spirit of art working creative through the mass; that *chaos*, into which the eighteenth century with its wild war of hypocrites and sceptics had reduced the Past, begins here to be once more a *world*. This, the highest that can be said of written Books, is to be said of these: there is in them a New Time, the prophecy and beginning of a New Time. The corner-stone of a new social edifice for mankind is laid there; firmly, as

before, on the natural rock: far-extending traces of a ground-plan we can also see; which future centuries may go on to enlarge, to amend, and work into reality. These sayings seem strange to some; nevertheless they are not empty exaggerations, but expressions, in their way, of a belief, which is not now of yesterday; perhaps when Goethe has been read and meditated for another generation they will not seem so strange.

Precious is the new light of Knowledge which our Teacher conquers for us; yet small to the new light of Love which also we derive from him: the most important element of any man's performance is the Life he has accomplished. Under the intellectual union of man and man, which works by precept, lies a holier union of affection, working by example; the influences of which latter, mystic, deep-reaching, all-embracing, can still less be computed. For Love is ever the beginning of Knowledge, as fire is of light; and works also more in the manner of *fire*. That Goethe was a great Teacher of men means already that he was a good man; that he had himself learned; in the school of experience had striven and proved victorious. To how many hearers, languishing, nigh dead, in the airless dungeon of Unbelief (a true vacuum and nonentity), has the assurance that there was such a man, that such a man was still possible, come like tidings of great joy! He

who would learn to reconcile reverence with clearness; to deny and defy what is False, yet believe and worship what is True; amid raging factions, bent on what is either altogether empty or has substance in it only for a day, which stormfully convulse and tear hither and thither a distracted expiring system of society, to adjust himself aright; and, working for the world and in the world, keep himself unspotted from the world—let him look here. This man, we may say, became morally great, by being in his own age, what in some other ages many might have been, a genuine man. His grand excellency was this, that he was genuine. As his primary faculty, the foundations of all others was Intellect, depth and force of Vision; so his primary virtue was Justice, was the courage to be just. A giant's strength we admired in him; yet, strength ennobled into softest mildness; even like that "silent rock-bound strength of a world," on whose bosom, which rests on the adamant, grow flowers. The greatest of hearts was also the bravest; fearless, unwearied, peacefully invincible. A completed man: the trembling sensibility, the wild enthusiasm of a Mignon can assort with the scornful world-mockery of a Mephistopheles; and each side of many-sided life receives its due from him.

Goethe reckoned Schiller happy that he died young, in the full vigour of his days; that we could "figure

him as a youth for ever." To himself a different, higher destiny was appointed. Through all the changes of man's life, onwards to its extreme verge, he was to go; and through them all nobly. In youth, flatterings of fortune, uninterrupted outward prosperity cannot corrupt him; a wise observer has to remark: "Non but a Goethe, at the Sun of earthly happiness, can keep his phœnix-wings unsinged." Through manhood, in the most complex relation, as poet, courtier, politician, man of business, man of speculation; in the middle of revolutions and counter-revolutions, outward and spiritual; with the world loudly for him, with the world loudly or silently against him; in all seasons and situations, he holds equally on his way. Old age itself, which is called dark and feeble, he was to render lovely: who that looked upon him there, venerable in himself, and in the world's reverence ever the clearer, the purer, but could have prayed that he too were such an old man? And did not the kind Heavens continue kind, and grant to a career so glorious the worthiest end?

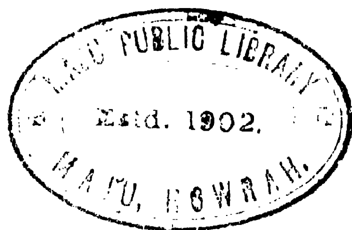
Such was Goethe's Life; such has his departure bee He sleeps now beside his Schiller and his Carl Augu of Weimar: so had the Prince willed it, that betwe these two should be his own final rest. In life the were united, in death they are not divided. The un wearied Workman now rests from his labours; the frui

of these is left growing, and to grow. His earthly years have been numbered and ended: but of his Activity, for it stood rooted in the Eternal, there is no end. All that we mean by the higher Literature of Germany, which is the higher Literature of Europe, already gathers round this man, as its creator; of which grand object, dawning mysterious on a world that hoped not for it, who is there that can measure the significance and far-reaching influences? The Literature of Europe will pass away; Europe itself, the Earth itself, will pass away: this little lifeboat of an Earth, with its noisy crew of a Mankind, and all their troubled History, will one day have vanished; faded like a cloud-speck from the azure of the All! What, then, is man! What, then, is man! He endures but for an hour, and is crushed before the moth. Yet in the being and in the working of a faithful man is there already (as all faith, from the beginning, gives assurance) a something that pertains not to this wild death-element of Time; that triumphs over Time, and *is*, and will be, when Time shall be no more.

And now we turn back into the world, withdrawing from this new-made grave. The man whom we love lies there, but glorious, worthy; and his spirit yet lives in us with an authentic life. Could each here vow to do his little task, even as the Departed did his great one; in the manner of a true man, not for a Day, but for

Eternity! To live, as he counselled and commanded, not commodiously in the Reputable, the Plausible, the Half, but resolutely in the Whole, the Good, the True!

"*Im Ganzen, Guten, Wahren resolut zu leben?*"



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